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# *Lost Illusion*

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TO MY SON, JON,  
*In memory of his father.*



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## *Introduction*

MANY FOREIGNERS have visited the Soviet Union. Some have lived there as journalists, diplomats, engineers and businessmen. Almost all of them have been of necessity outsiders looking in—as cut off from any real communication with the Russian people as the inhabitants of another planet. The usual foreigner, secure on the heights of his privileged position of freedom from want and fear, can have no conception of what terror means, while the subjects of the Kremlin are too terrorized to dare to enlighten him. Communist functionaries from abroad living in Moscow are of course no strangers to the uses of terror; but they too, far from sharing the life of the Russian people, dwell in the remote Olympian world of the Commu-

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nist ruling class. I who married a Russian saw Russia both from inside and from below, since for six years I shared some of the hardships and all the fears of the forcibly silenced Russian people.

Since I had retained my British passport I was free to return to the free world. But my husband could not, and was not sure that he would if he could, since in the words of Boris Pasternak he was "tied to Russia by birth, life and work." So I lived on in Russia long after I had no illusions left.

There is an old Chinese saying which runs: "Generous are the gods in granting life, but how niggardly when asked of its understanding." Some small measure of understanding was given to me during the sweet and bitter years of my life in Russia, where I experienced happiness and heartbreak, love and sorrow, and came to appreciate some truths unknown to other Western writers, who have never seen Russia through Russian eyes.

Russians and other subjects of the Soviet Empire who have escaped to the Free World know more and have suffered and experienced more than I. Some have written books of greater literary merit covering a larger canvas than mine. And Boris Pasternak from inside Russia has now given the whole world a vibrant work of art depicting the tragic

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Russian landscape from the point of view of a great poet and Christian humanist with profound insight into the heart and soul of man. My book makes no pretensions to aspire to the same heights of artistic achievement or philosophical and religious understanding.

My own outlook, when I went to Russia, was that of the optimistic, rational and agnostic Western world, and perhaps particularly English in that it was basically empirical. In spite of my having for a brief period belonged to the Communist Party and imagined myself a Marxist, the Communist philosophy or mystique was as alien to my mentality as the worship of Moloch or Baal. I could not reject the evidence of my senses and my experience, or be convinced by the mumbo jumbo, which the Communists call dialectics, that all was for the best in the worst of all possible worlds. I was incapable of believing that a more human and just society would ever be created by destroying man's humanity and violating his sense of justice, or that heaven on earth would eventually be established by diabolic means.

While I have remained a liberal in the original meaning of that much abused word, my life in Russia taught me more than is dreamed of in the philosophy of many Western liberals. Unlike others, who have never

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been tried in the fire of a totalitarian tyranny, I cannot feel myself better or more "liberty loving" than any other people who have lived under the shadow of terror. I merely feel myself more fortunate. "There but in the grace of God go I" is a precept indelibly printed on the tablet of my mind by my experience in Russia.

Man's understanding and imagination are limited by his experience. Those who have always known the blessings of liberty are as incapable of understanding the compulsions which drive the subjects of a Communist dictatorship, as those who have never hungered are able to realize what it means to cry for bread. And even the peoples outside the charmed circle of Western democracy have no conception of what it means to be the subjects of a modern totalitarian tyranny under which everybody belongs body and soul to an all-powerful state. Having felt the scourge of Communist tyranny upon my own flesh and spirit, I understood all too well the reason why the Germans under Hitler's National Socialist dictatorship, like the Russians under Stalin's, had perforce become accessories to the crimes against humanity perpetrated by their rulers. It was not because "the Germans" or "the Russians" are more cruel, vicious, unprincipled, cowardly or aggressive

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than other nations, races or peoples, but because the Germans in 1933, like the Russians in 1917, in their hope of escaping from the intolerable conditions of their existence, unwittingly brought to power, or failed to resist the establishment of a ruthless despotism from which there were only two escape routes: either death or, in the words of Boris Pasternak, "to vanish somewhere, forgotten as a nameless number in one of the innumerable concentration camps," which were an integral part of the Communist and Nazi political and economic systems.

During all the years of my life in Russia I had longed to protest, to rebel and to "speak for the silent," to quote the title of the book written in 1935 by Professor Tchernavim, who had succeeded in escaping from a slave labor camp near the Finnish border. But I too was gagged by fear. Even after my husband's arrest and in spite of my having been able to bring our two-year-old son to safety in England, I remained silent for three years because I knew all too well that if I wrote the truth about Russia I would condemn my husband to certain death, if he were still alive.

Finally in the summer of 1939 following the Stalin-Hitler pact which united the Communist and the Nazi totalitarian tyrannies I threw caution to the winds. I felt sure that

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if my husband were still alive he would wish me to bear witness to the truth, even if by doing so I should sign his death warrant. So I wrote *The Dream We Lost*, published in the United States in 1940.

Those were the days when the true face of Communism was still veiled. Many mistaken people in the West had been deluded by Moscow's hypocritical pretensions and skilful propaganda into believing, as I had once believed, that a better social order was in process of being created in the USSR. I hoped to help in dispelling these illusions. Instead, *The Dream We Lost* called down upon my head the opprobrium of precisely the same reviewers who had so extolled my previous book, *Japan's Feet of Clay*, that it had become a best seller in both England and America.

My first attempt to tell the truth about Russia saw the light of day during the brief period of disillusionment following the Stalin-Hitler pact, the Russo-German partition of Poland, and Stalin's aggression against Finland. Following Hitler's attack on Russia and America's entry into the war I and other "premature anti-Communists" had difficulty getting a hearing.

By 1948 when I wrote *Lost Illusion* the tide had turned, since the march of events had by

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then revealed the continued tyranny and imperialistic ambitions of Stalin's Russia. This shortened version of *The Dream We Lost*, now here republished, was as warmly praised as the original book had been damned; and was translated into many languages.

Yet even while old myths about Communism were being dispelled, new ones were being created. Although today Communism's "power of attraction" has long since waned in the West and is already on the decline in Asia, fear of the dread might of the Communist colossus which bestrides Eurasia exerts a similarly baneful influence. Believing that the USSR cannot be challenged without risking an atomic war which would make a desert of the world, the West dares not raise a standard to which all men desiring freedom can repair.

Yesterday's false hopes and today's exaggerated fears arise from the same cause.

The West is as far from "understanding Russia" as it ever was.

Even the usual formulation of the problem is incorrect. It is not understanding of "Russia" or of "the Russians" which is required—or, for that matter, of "the Chinese" or any other people under Communist rule. What the Free World needs, and continues to lack, is understanding of the aims and methods of

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Communism, the basis of its terrible power, and its fundamental weakness.

Russia ceases to be a "riddle wrapped in an enigma" and Soviet policy no longer seems incalculable, inconsistent or incomprehensible, once one comprehends that the Soviet Government does not represent "Russia" or the "Russians" but the vested interest of the Communist Party. Through all the permutations of Soviet policy from Stalin to Khrushchev realization of this basic fact is the key to "understanding Russia."

I have therefore not attempted to revise or rewrite *Lost Illusion* in the light of recent developments in the Communist world. My story stands as it was originally condensed from *The Dream We Lost* written nearly two decades ago. Historically it covers the period which begins where *Dr. Zhivago's* story ends. The Russia I knew so well before the war has, of course, changed, but its essential character remains the same.

Even the most inefficient economic system produces more, by arithmetical progression, following an increased capital investment wrung out of the blood, sweat and tears of a whole generation. Material conditions for the Russian masses today have undoubtedly substantially improved. Men, women and children in the USSR no longer starve or freeze



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to death without shelter. There is enough bread and herring for all; and meat, butter or margarine, vegetables and some other foods are no longer an unknown or rare luxury. Clothing and shoes, pots and pans, nails and needles, soap and other household necessities are less difficult to obtain now, although they are still exorbitantly expensive and of poor quality. Housing, although almost as congested as in my time, shows some slight signs of improvement.

On the other hand, the gross inequalities in living standards as between the rulers and the ruled, the privileged and the unprivileged, the possessing and the exploited classes appear to have increased. The life of the ordinary people, in particular that of the workers on the land, is still desperately poor. It is doubtful whether Soviet Russia's production of food in relation to the country's population is much above the level of three decades ago. The virtual silence of Soviet statistics with regard to the income, consumption and even the numbers of the peasants bears testimony to there having been no substantial improvement in their material condition since 1928. Urban consumption levels are perhaps moderately better than during the last years of the New Economic Policy, but the main advantages derived from indus-

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trial progress have been reaped by the upper and middle classes.

It is now estimated that the average wage in the USSR is only \$850 a year; but some 150,000 earn \$20,000, while the top 10,000 members of the elite or ruling class receive at least \$40,000, in addition to their "expense accounts" and all sorts of other privileges and perquisites. The significant change since my time is that only about half of this top layer of "millionaires" are today members of the Communist Party. The Party, which owns the land, capital and all other resources, human and material, has enlisted the support of a growing number of "non-Party specialists" by letting them share in the wealth disposed of by the State. And it is this new elite which wants assurance of personal security by relaxation of the terror within and the cold war without.

To judge from reliable accounts of conditions in the USSR today, it would seem that, for the moment at least, the subjects of the Kremlin have been given a measure of freedom from fear as well as from want comparable to that which they enjoyed during the period of the New Economic Policy, inaugurated by Lenin after the disastrous years of War Communism, and ended by Stalin in 1928. Mass liquidations and purges have

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ceased since Stalin's death. The citizens of the USSR today no longer go to bed each night dreading the knock on the door which used to herald arrest, execution or condemnation to the living death of the concentration camps. In place of the ten or fifteen million people in slave labor camps in the Stalin era there are now a comparatively small, although still unknown number, and even their conditions of life and work have been improved. In short, the Communist dictatorship under Khrushchev's leadership is endeavoring to place more reliance on the carrot than the stick in driving the people of the Soviet empire toward the Communist promised land. Yet it remains open to doubt whether Khrushchev's comparatively liberal policy can endure any longer than previous periods of "relaxation from tension" by abatement of terror.

Terror produces diminishing returns, because there is a point beyond which men can no longer be goaded by the fear of death to work without reward. Periodically other incentives have to be provided if the wheels of production are not to slow down to the point of breakdown. Moreover, even if a bite at the carrot can keep the people working, fear kills initiative among the managerial class, and inside the Communist bureaucracy it

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produces a deadening rigidity. The Soviet Empire cannot hope to "catch up and surpass the capitalist world" by becoming more dynamic unless it releases suppressed energies by granting a measure of freedom. The question then arises: How much freedom can a dictatorship permit without setting in motion forces which will destroy it? Khrushchev may be endeavoring to get rid of the old hidebound Party officials who believe in Stalinist methods, and to open the door to the new generation of qualified Party and non-Party specialists who see the need for change and want to work for it. But he has as yet shown no intention of weakening the autocratic political system.

In short, Khrushchev's problem, assuming that he genuinely desires to transform the Soviet system into a popularly supported regime ruled by hope instead of fear, is that of the man who rides a tiger and dares not dismount for fear of being devoured.

Much as the Communist ruling class and the Soviet bureaucracy may desire to relax and enjoy their material privileges, powers and perquisites by consent of the people instead of by force, they dare not entrust themselves to the will of the people. They cannot help fearing that freedom, if tolerated at all, will get out of hand and threaten the very

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existence of the system. Mao Tse-tung in China yesterday, like Khrushchev in Russia today, would no doubt willingly "let a hundred flowers bloom"—provided they were sure that the blooms would all be red. Finding that this was not the case Mao chopped off their heads. Khrushchev will almost certainly do likewise if the Russians show signs of utilizing the liberties he has given them in any attempt to overthrow their Communist overlords. In a word, the limited freedom the Russians are now enjoying will endure only so long as they take no advantage of it.

The case of Boris Pasternak proves that, although the Soviet dictatorship under Khrushchev's leadership has adopted less brutal and more sophisticated methods than Stalin's or Mao's to enforce conformity and obedience to Communist dictates, the new regime is just as determined as the old to suppress subversive ideas, or any expression of the free spirit of man.

As all the world knows, this great Russian poet, novelist and philosopher, whose *Dr. Zhivago* has been acclaimed as worthy to rank with the writings of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and other giants of the pre-revolutionary era, was not only denied publication of his book in Russia, but compelled to refuse the 1958 Nobel prize for literature.

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On October 26 Pasternak, informed of the honor he had received, sent a telegram to Stockholm in which he said he was "immensely grateful, touched, proud, astonished and abashed." But within eleven days' time—after the award by Sweden had been branded as a "hostile political act" by the official publication *Literaturnaya Gazetta* and Pasternak himself had been variously labeled a "resurrected Judas," a "pig," and a "snake," and threatened with exile—he was forced not only to decline the prize but to make a statement obviously designed to detract from his moral standing. On November 5, over a week after he had refused the award on October 29, *Pravda* published a letter in which Pasternak confessed his "errors." "I was wrong," he wrote, in not having at first realized that "this award was a political measure which has now resulted in monstrous consequences." He had been warned, he said, that his novel might be understood as a "work directed against the October Revolution and the foundations of the Soviet system," but had not realized this and now regretted it. He ended by making the questionable, if not actually false, assertion that he had "a bright faith in the future" and was "proud of the times in which I live and of the people who surround me."

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Yet only three days earlier Pasternak had told a German correspondent that he was still glad he had written *Dr. Zhivago*, even though at the same time he had asserted that everything he had done during the preceding days had been done "without compulsion." It is all too clear that Pasternak is torn between his conscience, his genius and his religious faith on the one hand, and his attachment to his beloved land. He fears banishment more than death, and no doubt hopes that by enduring inside Russia he will help to redeem and emancipate his people. In his agony of divided loyalties he alternates between defiance of Communist power and submission to it. At one moment he emerges from the fog with another message of faith and hope and belief in the eternal values denied by the dictatorship under which he lives. Subsequently, driven by fear, not for his life but lest he be exiled or cut off from "the community" to which he belongs, he reneges or partially recants.

It would in fact seem that, although Khrushchev has so far refrained from liquidating critics of the Communist regime, his methods are equally effective in bringing them to heel. In Pasternak's words, in an interview with a Swedish journalist, "The demands of the hierarchy are very slight.

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There is only one thing they really want: You should hate what you like and love what you abhor." But, he added, "this is the most difficult of all."

Communism will, of course be better served if Pasternak is broken than if he is liquidated. His book constitutes a danger to the system because of its exaltation of the individual human conscience, its eloquent exposition of a Tolstoyan non-sectarian Christian philosophy, and its affirmation of the irresistible power of unarmed truth against all the force of dogma, fraud and terror.

Today as yesterday, the role of the writer and intellectual in Communist society is simply to aid and support the ruling Party. Any book which fails to contribute to this positive aim is regarded as politically negative or positively counter revolutionary.

Yet one can hope that the fire lighted inside Russia by Boris Pasternak will not be extinguished. Millions of Russians feel and think as he does, although they dare not say so. And *Dr. Zhivago* has awakened the world outside to a far better understanding of Russia than it ever had before. The millions who have read the book must now realize that the Russians are the unwilling victims of the Soviet system, not its enthusiastic supporters.

For the first time the cry of the "other



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Russia," the real but silenced Russia, has been heard everywhere in the world ; and we are coming to understand that the weight of this "other Russia" has its effect on Soviet foreign policy as well as at home. Khrushchev no doubt sincerely desires to "reduce tensions" in order to acquire a breathing space for the consolidation and development of the Soviet Empire. He cannot produce enough carrots to avoid use of the stick unless he can secure a thaw in the cold war. He cannot hope to bring about even the modest rise in the general standard of living of the Soviet people sufficient to assure popular support, unless and until he can reduce the size of the Soviet armed forces, and devote more of Russia's human and material resources to the production of "butter" instead of "guns." Moreover, if he is to make real the "pie in the sky" promised again and again to Russian "workers and peasants," he must also secure credits and more trade with the Free World.

But there is little doubt that if Khrushchev meets with setbacks he will revert to the brutal methods which Stalin used to suppress discontent—and which were not foreign to Khrushchev himself in the past.

No leader of the Communist oligarchy dare accept "peaceful co-existence" as a permanent state, because they know that so long

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as freedom continues to exist outside their own domains, their subjects will continue to long for it and hope for liberation from outside.

True that the Soviet elite now includes a new generation of Communist-reared managers, engineers, scientists, technicians and other qualified persons, in place of the "non-Party specialists" who in my time were excluded from the Party and from leading positions on account of their "bourgeois" origins. True, this new professional class has the qualifications to earn a good living even in a free society; and it is they, no doubt, who constitute the forces which support Khrushchev in his apparent attempt to liberalize the system. But the old-line Communists whose position and material advantages depend, not on the value of their services, but on maintenance of the Communist Party's monopoly of political and economic power, still have to be reckoned with. Lenin said no ruling class ever voluntarily gives up its power. And as Milovan Djilas wrote from his prison in Yugoslavia, the "New Class" of the "Red elite," which is as exclusive as old aristocracies but without their refinement, "cannot renounce ownership without undermining itself."

Although I doubt whether the Communist regime can transform itself into one in which

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the desires of the people for security and well-being take precedence over the class interests of the Communist ruling and exploiting class, I recognize the fact that the iron laws of economics are compelling the Kremlin to go further than ever before in endeavoring to rule by consent instead of by compulsion.

Thanks to the terrible years when millions perished in Stalin's "man-made famine" during the period of forced collectivization in the early thirties, or who died of hunger and overwork in his slave labor camps, or who were killed during the second World War, the Soviet Union today is short of manpower. Russia's population loss due to these causes has been conservatively estimated at fifty millions. This may well be the compelling reason why Khrushchev is endeavoring to secure a breathing space by "relaxing tensions" inside and outside the Soviet Empire. According to careful studies and analyses of available Russian data the total population of the Soviet Union has increased relatively little during the past thirty years, if one leaves out of account the territorial annexations which added some twenty million people to the Soviet Empire as a result of the Second World War.

For a time Soviet Russia's industrializa-

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tion may actually have benefited from these demographic catastrophes which "removed" the surplus agricultural population and, by reducing the birth rate produced a "low dependency ratio." As one of the best qualified experts on Russia, Professor Gregory Grossman of the University of California points out, these deaths or "non-births" resulted in "a high ratio of the population of working age to the total population." But this was only a short-term advantage: "The unborn children and the drastic excision of a large part of the agrarian overpopulation under tragic circumstances were a loan extended by time to the Soviet industrialization drive. The loan is falling due. The children of the forties have begun to enter the labour force, and until the mid-sixties it will expand very little." \*

Before writing this Introduction to the new edition of my book I studied some of the evidence available concerning present conditions in the Communist world. It was impossible for me to return to Russia; but thanks to the Leipzig Fair, when the Communists raise the Iron Curtain each year for the sake of trade and advertisement, I was able to pay

\* *Thirty Years of Soviet Industrialisation* in the October-December, 1958, issue of *Soviet Survey* published by the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

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a short visit to Eastern Germany in March 1959. There I could appraise, if only cursorily and from outside, both the differences and the similarities between the Communist way of life I had known before the war, and to-day.

My experience in Russia made it not too difficult for me to penetrate behind the façade of conformity which all subjects of a Communist dictatorship present to foreign visitors. Once they realized that I understood how dangerous it was to talk freely, the people I spoke to in the streets, at the fair, in streetcars, taxis, restaurants and cafes, became more communicative than I had dared to hope. The fact that almost all of them dared to tell me how much they detested the Communist regime under which they were forced to live in itself constituted evidence that there is now some abatement of terror in the Soviet Empire; for in my days in Russia no one would have dared to express his true feelings to a stranger. There was also no doubt that material conditions have improved during the past five years.

To the Russians who have never known anything better this may constitute evidence of progress. But to the German workers who have known a far higher standard of living, and to the older among them who have

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memories of freedom, the life they lead still seems miserable and brutish. It is, however, no longer intolerable as it was when they revolted in 1953. And because hope of liberation has died or is dying many were attempting to adapt themselves to the Communist way of life enforced upon them and make the best of it.

Those who cannot stand the dreary drabness or dull boredom of their existence, the debasement of cultural values; the continual interference of the government and party in their private lives, the latent fear which permeates the atmosphere, the need to conform outwardly, and the enforced attendance at meetings to listen to the same old propaganda—in short the need to pretend that you like what you hate in order to keep what you have—flee to the West through the hole in the Iron Curtain in Berlin. Those who get out while the going is good, or at least possible, include many of the best qualified workers, technicians, scientists, teachers and farmers—men and women confident in their ability to start again from scratch in the Free World, and courageous enough to take the risk of crossing the forbidden frontier. The many thousands who leave East Germany every month, abandoning all they possess in order to live in freedom, are the same

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breed of men who long ago were not deterred by the hardships involved in emigrating to the new world of opportunity in America from the confined world of nineteenth-century Europe. But those who stay on no longer include only those who dare not take the risk of trying to escape, and the German Communists installed in power by the Red army. There are today others who have acquired a vested interest in the Communist system. There are former Nazis who enjoy privileges and powers under the Red flag so long as they are as loyal to Moscow as they once were to Nazi Germany. There are highly qualified engineers, technicians and managers who enjoy a comparatively high standard of living so long as they work for the Soviet Empire. And there are also former farm laborers who have become small holders and have thus acquired a stake which they will not give up by fleeing to the West, and which they fear may be taken from them if the old landowners return. The Communist governments of the "Peoples Republics" press hard on the small "independent" farmer by taxation and forced deliveries of produce at low prices to the State, but still permit some to exist without joining a collective farm. And to those who were once landless this penurious existence, or even the

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prospect of becoming members of a collective farm may seem preferable to the alternative of becoming destitute refugees in the West.

As I talked to the people at Leipzig, there seemed little doubt that the great majority of Germans in the "Peoples' Democratic Republic" hate and fear the Communist dictatorship as much or more than the Russians did when I lived among them. But it was also evident that many still believe in the Socialist ideal. Some of the young and hopeful had been won over by recent rectification of abuses and relaxation of terror into believing that a better and freer life is possible under Communist rule. Others being old, cannot abandon their faith in the Socialist ideal to which they had dedicated their lives.

Both old-style Communists and Social Democrats who either managed to survive in Nazi concentration camps, or who fled to Russia and came back with the conquering Red army, in spite of their detestation of the tyranny which oppresses their countrymen, cling to their faith in Socialism. They make a distinction between the forcibly imposed tyrannical Soviet political system, and the Socialist ideal, which they continue to hope will eventually be realized. To them it seems that to flee to the West would be a betrayal of their faith in Socialism.



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Having been cut off for so long from knowledge of developments in the "capitalist world," they still envision it as it was in the era of the great depression, or fail to realize that in the West the system they call "capitalist" and which in America is called "free enterprise" has long since been transformed into a much closer approximation to their ideal of social justice than Socialism is ever likely to turn out in practice anywhere in the world.

Likewise, in the Free World, in spite of all disillusionments concerning Soviet Russia, the illusion persists that Communism is not basically evil and destructive of the best hopes of mankind for justice and peace on earth, but a great ideal betrayed in Russia and its satellite countries in Eastern Europe, which can be realized in other lands by other men by other means.

Confusion is worse confounded because in the West some hate Communism not for what it is but for what it professes to be, while others are still attracted to it because they imagine that it is what it is not, or that it could become what its original adherents intended.

The house of Communism has many mansions. It is not, today, inhabited only by those who lust for power, or are possessed by the

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devil of envy, malice, hatred and all incharitableness. It still shelters some who hunger for righteousness and are willing to sacrifice themselves as well as others in the hope of creating a better world.

The just and the unjust enter through the same revolving door, and the stream pressing in with great expectations is matched or exceeded by the crowd of the disillusioned getting out. Those who enter in the hope of putting an end to human misery, want and oppression do not usually stay long, after discovering that the Communist realm is not one of hope and high endeavor but a fearful kingdom where there is more "wailing and gnashing of teeth" than in the imperfect world outside. But some remain because they cannot abandon the Communist philosophy which motivates their lives and thoughts in spite of their revulsion against the terrible realities of the Communist "way of life." Continuing to believe that good can come out of evil and that the end justifies the means, they stifle the humanitarian feelings which first led them to join the Communist Party. They cannot admit, even to themselves, that the cause to which they have devoted their lives is a mirage and a delusion. Like those who have invested their life-savings in a

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bankrupt concern, they throw good money after bad in a futile endeavor to retrieve their losses. But in the case of the true believer in the Communist faith it is not hope of material reward on earth, but of paradise regained which causes them to sacrifice their souls as well as their lives to the Communist Moloch. Communism could never have established, maintained or extended its tyrannical power had it not enlisted, inside and outside Russia, the support of men of good will dedicated to an ideal of human betterment and willing to make any sacrifice in order to realize it.

Koestler in his masterpiece *Darkness at Noon* has analyzed and made understandable the process of "dialectical" reasoning which impelled the Old Guard of the Bolshevik Party to reject the evidence of their senses concerning the realities of the world they had made, to drive compassion from their hearts, betray friends, condone atrocities, and finally sacrifice their reputations as well as their lives as a burnt offering on the altar of Communist orthodoxy.

This species of true believer was the salt which imparted savor to the mess of Communist potage. Inside the Soviet Empire it is now extinct. Today the Bolshevik Party is

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composed almost exclusively of careerists. The Russians themselves have a word which describes them: *razlajitsa*, meaning "decomposed." It used to be the adjective used to designate Party members who were seduced by the flesh-pots of the "capitalist world." It now perfectly describes the "New Class" which rules Russia in the name of the "workers and peasants."

The totalitarian state inevitably creates an environment in which only the ruthless and unscrupulous, time-servers and cynical opportunists flourish, and where only those who conform can survive. But in the world outside, where illusions concerning Communism persist, it still attracts some innocent liberals dedicated to the original Socialist ideal of human brotherhood, peace on earth and the rights of all men to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Few Europeans any longer believe that Communism stands for liberty, equality and fraternity; the shock of the Red Army's brutal suppression of the Hungarian workers' revolution in 1956 caused such an awakening and revulsion that thousands joined the outgoing stream around the revolving door.

In some countries of Asia and elsewhere where there is not only abysmal poverty,

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gross inequality, oppressive or corrupt government, but also ranking memories of exploitation and humiliation by Western imperialism in the heyday of "colonialism," Communism has not yet lost its power of attraction, if only because it seems to offer a short-cut to material progress, national dignity, strength and power.

Many people still have to learn that Communist imperialist rule is far worse than anything they have experienced in the past. But in Asia and Africa the process of disillusionment is well under way. First the Korean war, and subsequently reports coming out of China of the oppression and exploitation and inhuman regimentation of the peasants, forcibly separated from their wives and children, deprived of the scant personal property they possessed, and driven to work sixteen hours a day in so-called "communes," have speeded knowledge of the terrible realities of the Communist "way of life." And as I write, events in Tibet are giving Asia an example as tragic and instructive as that provided by Hungary in 1956 of the ruthless and barbaric inhumanity of Communist imperialism in its methods of enslaving weak and small nations.

It is in the hope that *Lost Illusion* can con-

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tribute to a better understanding of Communism and realization of the menace it constitutes to the best hopes of mankind everywhere in the world, that it is now republished.

FREDA UTLEY

*Leipzig, March 1959*

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

FREDA UTLEY'S life story as a communist who learned the rigors of totalitarian life in Russia the hard way, was published shortly before Pearl Harbor. The original limited edition could not compete with the turbulent emotions of our country on the verge of war.

I was one of those who read and admired Freda Utley's book, "The Dream We Lost," and urged her at the end of the war to condense and revise it for republication as an important human document, particularly in the light of present events.

Freda Utley has now rewritten her book and given it a new title, "Lost Illusion."

The dream that Freda Utley lost during her six years in the USSR where she lived as a Russian, was a personal sort of disillusion. Today, aspects of her shattered dream are shared by so many others that her book now has a universal quality. Without ever having lived through the experiences which

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Miss Utley retails so vividly, most of us who read her book hoped that at the end of World War II Russia would take her place beside the capitalist nations to form one world.

We hoped and believed that, by diplomatic give and take and for reasons of mutual self-interest, we could do business with Stalin and the Kremlin. Stalin himself, if one remembers correctly, concurred in that belief. Now, as we survey the recent wrecks of illusion, Miss Utley's account of her stay in Soviet Russia assumes a new importance.

The more we can learn about the Russian mind, and how it works under its present controls, the better we will understand events and attitudes that seem incredible to us. "Lost Illusion," more than any other book with which I am familiar, succeeds in giving a comprehensible picture of this mind. One of its great beauties is that the author never set out consciously to do so. She has achieved it by indirection.

There are, one recalls, several other narratives, widely read and designed along similar lines. Among them, Eugene Lyons' "Assignment in Utopia" comes first to mind, but Mr. Lyons, though once as much an enthusiast for the Communist experiment as



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Miss Utley, stepped behind the Iron Curtain as a newspaperman and an American citizen.

Freda Utley went from England with her Russian husband prepared to throw in her lot with the people. She was a unit of the Marxist State, and one of the few who have escaped to tell. "I Chose Freedom" is a more recent book, but its author, Victor Kravchenko, was a Russian, reared in the Russian Communist party, and consequently speaks across the Russian chasm.

Freda Utley was born an English woman, taught in the best British tradition and became a trained observer and an excellent writer. Thus she can describe her Russian adventures in terms that are to us here entirely understandable, with reactions close to what ours might be in a similar situation.

No other Westerner who broke with the Communists has had quite her intimate experience with the Russian way of life. No Russian, or other foreigner, has been able to describe as she has the details of crowded living, servants, childbirth, the decline of belief in standards of behavior, the loss of integrity under police state government.

"Lost Illusion" is a moving and tragic human document. Yet though it is written with

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deep emotion and conviction, it is also written with honesty, fairness and detachment. There could not be a better time than now for presenting a new and revised edition.

JOHN P. MARQUAND

*Newburyport,  
Massachusetts.  
October 1, 1947*

*Lost Illusion*



## I

### *How I Became a Communist*

I FIRST visited Soviet Russia in the summer of 1927, when Lenin's "New Economic Policy" was still in force and Trotsky not yet exiled, although he had been eliminated from the political scene. The people were enjoying a measure of prosperity and a degree of liberty unknown three years later. There was still a society which might be called semi-socialist, but signs of degeneration were perceptible if I had had the wit to see them.

But I did not see them. As a delegate, an enthusiastic and youthful Communist recently emerged from the chrysalis of the British Labor Party, I believed most, if not all, I was told. I was without previous experience of a police state to teach me that no one in Russia would dare speak his mind

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to a foreigner. My own days as a resident of Moscow were still far off. Such Russian friends as I had, although not all were Bolsheviks, fervently believed in the "good society" being created in the USSR.

"One's character is one's fate," and character is mainly the product of environment. It is only in middle age one sees how the influences of youth have determined the course of life. Those influences in my case were both socialist and liberal. A passion for the emancipation of mankind, rather than the blueprint of a planned society or any mystical yearning to merge myself in a fellowship, led me to enter the Soviet Union and to leave it six years later with my political beliefs and my personal happiness alike shattered.

I came to communism via Greek history, the French revolutionary literature I had read in childhood, and the English nineteenth-century poets of freedom. I came, not in revolt against a strict bourgeois upbringing, nor because of failure to make a place for myself in capitalist society, but profoundly influenced by a happy childhood, a socialist father, and a Continental education. For me, then, the communist ideal seemed the fulfillment of the age-long struggle of mankind for freedom and justice.

My studies, both of ancient history and

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modern economics, made me abhor servitude in any form, and the Communists seemed to me to be the only socialists who really believed in world-wide equality and liberty. Yet the same influences which turned my hopes toward Russia were to make it impossible for me to accept the Soviet regime once I came to know it intimately.

I was, in Stalinist phraseology, a "rotten liberal," a "petty bourgeois intellectual"—one who foolishly desired social justice, freedom, and equality, and who imagined that socialism meant an end to oppression and injustice.

My mother, daughter of a radical Manchester family, had met my father, William Herbert Utley, at the age of sixteen. Edward Averling, the son-in-law of Karl Marx and the translator of *Das Kapital*, brought him to my grandfather's house. My grandfather, although a "bourgeois," being a manufacturer, was a free-thinker and a republican, and boasted of how his wife's mother, when old and very ill, had hidden the great Chartist leader, Feargus O'Connor, in her bed when the police were searching the house for him.

My mother, one of nine children, had shown unusual independence by leaving her comfortable home to train as a nurse in Lon-

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don. There she secretly married my father against the wishes of my grandfather, who considered marriage to a poor journalist most undesirable. My father was then editorial writer and music critic on the *London Star*, the most famous liberal newspaper of the time. George Bernard Shaw, its dramatic critic, was his friend, as also were Sidney and Beatrice Webb and other Fabians. For a time my father acted as Secretary of the Fabian Society.

He would have stood for Parliament as a Socialist had not my arrival prevented it. Members of Parliament were not paid a salary in those days and I was the second child, so a political career was out of the question. In the years before he had a family to support, my father had taken part in the great labor struggles of the late eighties and early nineties. He had been arrested with John Burns at a demonstration of the unemployed in Trafalgar Square and had spoken from the same platform as Friedrich Engels in Manchester. Half a century later I was to find my father's name on documents in the library of the Marx Engels Institute in Moscow.

His influence over me was profound, and he early implanted in my mind those libertarian values which have consciously or un-



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consciously motivated my life. His socialism, like that of many other Englishmen, was colored and humanized by the nineteenth century liberal atmosphere. It was the kind of socialism believed in by William Morris, the romantic Victorian rebel artist-poet whom my father had known in his youth, and whose influence over the British Socialist movement was far greater than that of Karl Marx. Morris has been described as an emotional socialist. The basic difference between him and the Marxists whose philosophy he repudiated, is that Morris was in revolt against poverty and oppression in any form and denounced the materialist concepts of the age. He hated the sordid ugliness of nineteenth century industrialism and the values of capitalist society and wanted men to think and feel differently. He was also contemptuous of Marx's elaborate "scientific" theories about capitalism and class war.

The early influences which shaped my thoughts and feelings were thus essentially liberal, based on belief in reason and logic and the desire for the emancipation of mankind in body and spirit. I failed in my youth to perceive that communism is a substitute for religion and is essentially irrational in its mystical belief in inevitable progress

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through revolution. Perhaps, however, in my case as in that of many young people today, the instinctive desire for a religion was the compelling force leading me, step by step, into the Communist trap.

The experience of going to an expensive boarding school in England no doubt contributed to the psychological foundations in my subconscious mind for the militant communism which in my twenties supplanted the socialist outlook.

From the age of nine to thirteen, I lived on the Continent. I traveled with my parents until, when I was eleven, I went to boarding school on Lake Geneva. Those two years in French Switzerland among German girls "finishing" their education, were one of the happiest periods of my life; the four succeeding years at boarding school in England among the most unhappy.

At first I was the only English pupil in the Swiss school, and later one of two. I was also the youngest. The atmosphere was not unlike that of my home—studious, tolerant, kindly, and healthy. We skated, skied, and tobogganed in winter, bathed in Lake Geneva, and rowed and walked in the summer. But sport was regarded as a pleasure, not as a duty, and study—real hard study—was demanded of us all.

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My brother was at a boy's school a quarter of a mile away across the fields, and I had the run of his school as well as of my own. There were boys there from at least a dozen countries and of all ages from twelve to eighteen. I went there for fencing and riding lessons, and one summer I went hiking for a fortnight with the boys of his school, dressed as a boy and climbing the same mountains as youths of seventeen and eighteen.

In that period of my life I had no feeling that boys and girls were so very different; and mixing with English, Germans, French, Swiss, Italians, and other nationalities, speaking French fluently and German almost as well, I was little aware of national barriers. I naturally developed an international outlook which neither my father's influence nor theoretical socialist teaching alone could ever have given me.

From those pleasant days in Switzerland, I was plunged into the frigid, mentality-destroying atmosphere of an English boarding school for girls which aped the British public schools for boys. There was no hazing and physical brutality but there was mental, or perhaps one should call it social, bullying of the worst kind.

The greatest offenses against the social

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code which ruled our school were to study hard, or to show any originality in dress or behavior. I was handicapped from the start by having a slightly foreign accent. I can still remember being made to stand up in class to say "stirrup" over and over again, unable to pronounce the *r* in the English way.

I refused to be dictated to as to whether I should wear a black or a colored ribbon in my hair and avoided the disciplined games which bored me. My sins against the code were at first unconscious, then deliberate. The spirit of rebellion now, for the first time, had been awakened. Dimly I began to feel that the social hierarchy and the social code which governed our school were precisely that "capitalist system" which, as the daughter of a socialist, I had learned to think was the cause of all social injustice.

The girls at my school came in later life to symbolize "the imperialist English bourgeoisie" in my subconscious mind: class-conscious, sublimely self-confident and scornful of learning.

Of course I made some friends, but they were rebels like myself. I was a favorite of the head mistress, who imagined I was going to reflect glory on the school by future academic distinction. She gave me special facil-

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ities for study, in particular a room to myself, but in the end did more to awaken my budding revolutionary outlook than anyone else.

When the war came in 1914, my father was ruined. I was sixteen and had already passed Cambridge University's entrance examination. Mrs. Burton Brown, the head mistress, still thinking I would go to the University and win laurels for the school, gave me a year's free tuition. I began working for a scholarship to Cambridge. But it soon became clear that when I got it I should not be able to go to the University, because my father was dying of tuberculosis and I should have to start earning money as soon as I left school.

Then the head mistress began to make me feel that my presence was no longer desired. Instead of arranging for me to go to London University—where, as I learned later, I could have obtained a scholarship sufficient to keep me—she cast me off, as no longer of any interest or value to the school. She let it be known that I was in the school free and that my people were now almost destitute.

My home world had fallen to pieces, my brother was in the army, my father was so ill that we knew he would soon die. So at the age of seventeen I left school with no re-

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grets, and with personal experience to teach me that the social system could fling one into poverty from security, and prevent one from having an education even when one had proved one's mental qualifications.

At school I had been purposeful, wary, oversensitive and on guard against my fellow creatures, and, I imagine, sadly lacking in a sense of humor. Life was serious, life was earnest, and one must struggle without ceasing against one's environment. But I began to find the world as friendly and decent a place as I had thought it when I lived in Switzerland, or traveled in France and Italy with my parents, once I began to work at the War Office. The white collar workers were friendly, kind, and pleasant people. I even learned to laugh.

The death of my father in January 1918 was the first great grief of my life. I had loved him very dearly, and I had thought him the most wonderful person in the world—wise, tolerant, kind, never ill-tempered, and until the last absorbed in the course of history rather than in himself.

He died in extreme poverty in a tiny cottage in Cornwall, so primitive that my mother had to fetch water in a bucket from a pump across the fields. I had seen him choking to death as his exhausted heart

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could no longer pump blood through his diseased lungs. Half unconscious at the end, he murmured Shakespeare's words about the bourne from which no traveler returns, and said to us he was now only curious to know whether he was right in thinking that death was nothingness.

I brought my mother to London. She was broken in health by sorrow and the hard life she had lived nursing my father alone in Cornwall. My brother was far off in the war in Mesopotamia, and for a time I was my mother's sole support. My grandfather had stopped the few shillings he had grudgingly allowed during the last months of my father's life. He considered my mother's poverty a just punishment.

Mother and I lived on about eleven dollars a week I was earning at the War Office. With rent of three dollars a week and war prices for food, we were sometimes hungry. My brother, transferred to France in the summer of 1918, was wounded for the second time just before the end of the war, but by 1919 he was with us and life became a little easier.

Although I worked as a clerk in the War Office at a small salary, my father's teachings and my Continental education prevented me from becoming a "war patriot."

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I never thought of the Germans, among whom I had been at school from the age of eleven to thirteen, as any worse than the English. The overdose of French literature I had swallowed had given me a slight prejudice against the French whom I regarded as the most chauvinist and military-minded nation in Europe, eternally seeking *la gloire* and honoring the Napoleonic tradition above the revolutionary one.

At the War Office I became branch secretary of a trade-union, the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, then endeavoring to organize women office workers. Through this union I obtained, in 1920, a scholarship at London University where my brother Temple was enrolled on a grant from an officers' fund.

Active now in the socialist movement, I served as secretary of the King's College Socialist Society, and later as chairman of the London University Labor Party.

Our scholarships were not sufficient for us to live on and support our mother, so my brother and I gave English lessons to foreigners. My brother had pupils at the Czechoslovak Legation—his "checks" we called them—and I had Russians, employees of the Soviet Trade Delegation who first brought me in contact with Soviet officials.



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From the beginning I had been a defender of the Russian Revolution; but I had no more knowledge or understanding of communist theories than the Park Avenue pinks of today have of Marx. Nor did my pupils enlighten me, for they were high Communist Party officials out to enjoy life in the "capitalist world" after the rigors of Moscow. They confined their propaganda to jokes about England.

Then I met Boris Plavnik, an Old Bolshevik exiled after the revolution of 1905, to whom Communist theory was the breath of life. He was honest and sincere, although extremely vain. His English lessons usually became my German lessons and lessons in Marxist theory, from which, however, I might have benefited more had his arguments been less philosophical, dialectic and involved.

I was by this time an ardent and active member of the Independent Labor Party. I admired the Soviet Union and was becoming convinced that the official British Labor Party was too reformist ever to establish socialism, and was thoroughly "imperialist."

Plavnik was the most humane of men, and later on in Moscow where he remained my friend, he sank more and more into his shell,

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unable to defend, but unwilling to condemn outright, the atrocities committed by Stalin. Like many Old Bolsheviks whom I met later, he would not let himself face the fact that the revolutionary movement to which he had given his life had failed and degenerated into tyranny.

We saw less and less of him because meetings were too painful between friends who dared not speak out their thoughts to each other. Plavnik was lucky enough to go into an insane asylum just before the great purge began. At least that is where he was supposed to be, and we knew his mental faculties had been failing since the death of his wife a year or two before.

As a passionate defender of the Soviet Union, I was the speaker in a college debate on Russia, together with H. N. Brailsford. Our opponents were C. H. Driver, a fellow history student, who later became a Professor at Yale, and Sir Bernard Pares. When next I met Pares twelve years later, he had become the defender of the USSR and I was back in England, hating Stalin's Russia, but holding my tongue for my husband's sake.

From 1925 onwards I was drawing ever closer to the Communists. I stood with them against the right wing in the London University Labor Party, and in the University

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Labor Federation. The only influence which delayed my joining the Communist Party was that of Bertrand Russell, and unfortunately it was insufficient. I had met Russell when he came to speak for the King's College Socialist Society, and this led to a friendship which has been one of the most precious experiences of my life.

In the Easter vacation of 1926 I spent a month with him and Dora Russell in Cornwall, teaching his young son in the mornings, walking, talking, and bathing in the afternoons, reading aloud in the evenings. Bertrand Russell tried hard to convince me that the Marxist theory was untenable in the light of modern physics.

He set me to reading the *A.B.C. of Relativity* and when I found I could not understand it he told me to read the *A.B.C. of Atoms* first. He hoped that if he explained the difficult passages in these books I would be able to grasp the fact that Einstein had destroyed the basis of Marxist theory. As I wrote my brother at the time, I was being driven to study the theory of relativity in order to understand what Russell thought about Russia.

Unfortunately I failed to appreciate the philosophical and political significance of Einstein's discoveries. In spite of Russell's

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patience and the time he was prepared to waste on my education, I could not understand either Einstein or the basic connection between Communism and Newton's theory of gravity. Some of the Bolsheviks, however, understood it very well.

The writings of Einstein were banned in Soviet Russia while I lived there. For all I know, Russia's failure to keep abreast of America in physics, particularly the atom bomb, may be largely due to the communist sacrifice of scientific truth for political expediency.

Russell also failed to convince me of the truth of his *Theory and Practice of Bolshevism*. This book, written in 1920, is uncannily prophetic of present day Russia. Bertrand Russell was one of the very few who, in the earliest days of the Revolution, were able to perceive what manner of tree would grow from the seed which Lenin planted.

Although only experience could teach me the truth of Bertrand Russell's analysis and philosophy, and he failed to prevent my making a mess of my life, his teaching did at least help to save me from becoming a Trotskyist when I revolted against Stalinism.

When I came back to England from Mos-

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cow in 1931 and stayed at his house, I was still convinced that the horrible society being created in Russia was Stalin's fault, and that if Lenin had lived or if Trotsky's policy had been followed, all would have been well.

Bertie would bang his fist on the table and say, "No! Freda, can't you understand, even now, that the conditions you describe followed naturally from Lenin's premises and Lenin's acts? Will you never learn and stop being romantic about politics?"

The General Strike of 1926 was the turning point of my political development. The betrayal of high hopes by the Trade Union Congress and the Labor Party led me into the Communist fold, convinced of the reality of the class war, and that socialism could not be obtained gradually. It seemed to me that there was no solution for unemployment and low wages under capitalism, and that only the overthrow of the capitalist system and the "unity of the workers of the world" could save humanity.

The General Strike stirred all my emotions, and the more so as I was then living at Westfield College of London University as research student among the most conservative set of University teachers I had ever met. My crude, somewhat childish, but I believe sincere, revolutionary reaction is

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expressed in the following letter written to my mother in Devonshire on May 10, 1926:

"I have never lived through such a terrible week. I feel all hot inside and trembling all the time. It is such an unequal fight for us, and I want so much to help. I am speaking tonight at Edgware, I am glad to say. I wish I could speak all day—never was there a more unjust issue and more lies told by a government.

"Yet the Government is so ruthless it may win. It is parading armored cars about and soldiers are all over the place. The buses are running with two policemen on each and volunteer O.M.S. labor. Everything is quite safe for ordinary people like me—I almost wish it were not! I cannot write properly, dear, I am too worried and upset.

"It is so dreadful not to be able to help and to have to listen to the misrepresentations of the capitalists. Westfield is impossible except for a few students. I saw Wilmot (a minister in the British Labor Government of 1945-6) who is half expecting to be arrested for sedition. Anything almost can be called sedition. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the churches proposed terms of peace: withdrawal of both lockout and strike. The Government would not allow the

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proposal to be broadcast! It would be acceptable to us and not to them."

A few years later I was to realize that the behavior of the British Government was like that of a loving mother in comparison to that of the Soviet Government toward the Russian working class. But I still remember the passionate anger I felt in 1926 against the "capitalist government" and its most ruthless member, Winston Churchill, who was responsible for the show of armed force and whom we accused of being prepared to have the workers shot at if the strike went on.

Long afterwards when Hitler went to war against Russia, Winston Churchill was to become the darling of the Communists and their fellow travelers; following Hitler's defeat, he once again became the Kremlin's favorite target.

I was invested with my M.A. degree the day the General Strike was called off. After bicycling across to the Senate House at South Kensington and sitting impatiently waiting in a borrowed cap and gown to receive my scroll, I tore off to the Trades Union Congress headquarters. The bitterness of defeat and the long agony of the miners which was to follow the General Strike have quite obliterated from my mind any feelings

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of satisfaction I may have had in receiving an M.A. degree with distinction.

A year later I was invited to visit the Soviet Union as representative of all the Labor and Socialist clubs in British universities (the University Labor Federation). My writings had attracted the attention of Ivan Maisky, then Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in London. I had met Petrovsky, the Comintern representative in England during the General Strike, and had become very friendly with him and his wife.

I was regarded, I suppose, as a promising young "radical intellectual" whose complete conversion would be useful, and who had shown some understanding of Bolshevik theory in the articles I was contributing to the *New Leader*, the *Socialist Review*, and the *Labour Monthly*. I intended to join the Party as soon as I returned for the propaganda effect would be greater if I became a member after, not before, I visited Russia.

My excitement at the coming trip to the Land of Promise knew no bounds. My brother, from his bed in a tuberculosis sanatorium in Surrey, wrote me a few last words of caution:

"My dear Freda:

"This is just to wish you luck in your ad-



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venture. I think in one way you are quite right. I would do the same thing if I wanted to, I expect. After all, one must follow one's own thinking and one's own desires. It is an adventure, but I do not expect for a moment that you will find what you are seeking for intellectually. Men are much of a muchness everywhere, and they behave much in the same way whatever they profess to believe.

"Of course you will see the country and the people and society as you wish to believe they are, at first. But later, your skepticism will reassert itself.

"But don't join the Communist Party. It seems to me a terrible thing for any intelligent person to adhere to any creed or dogma; to have to say that you accept any empirical generalization as an article of faith. I do not see why you should not work for them and with them and yet reserve your opinion about their fundamental propositions.

"The best of luck, my dear. All my love—

"Temple"

I brushed aside my brother's arguments as I had those of Bertrand Russell. I couldn't see that they had anything to do with the question of how to achieve socialism. I replied to Temple from Moscow: "In spite of

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what you say, I must join the Communist Party. I cannot live without feeling I am doing worth-while work, and I see no hope in the Labor Party. I think the Communist thesis is right."

## II

### *I Marry a Russian*

I TRAVELED from Berlin to Moscow with Ivan Maisky and J. W. Brown, secretary of one of the most militant trade unions in England, the Clerical Association, made up of office workers in the Government Service. Maisky, then Counselor of the Soviet Embassy, later became Ambassador to England.

Two days after our arrival we stood in the Red Square in Moscow to witness the funeral of Voikov, murdered in Poland. This was the first demonstration I saw in the "socialist fatherland." I still remember vividly the exaltation, triumph, and excitement which filled my heart and mind as I stood close to Lenin's mausoleum in the sunlight under a blue sky and saw the Red Army parade, and the thousands upon thousands of demonstrators. My mind was full of romantic libertarian images.

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I wrote my mother after the demonstration, "People in the street look well enough fed though poorly clothed, and there seems to be such vitality and purpose among the people one meets. . . . The soldiers in the demonstration especially looked so splendid—more like the Greeks of Xenophon must have looked than like the usual wooden soldiers. . . ."

Visitors to the Soviet Union in those days were comparatively rare. Only invited delegates from trade unions and Labor Parties got the chance to travel over Russia. There was no Intourist which was organized later as a propaganda and money-making service to bring visitors to Russia.

I was surrounded by kindness, hospitality, and good fellowship. The market places of Moscow and other towns I visited were filled with vegetables, dairy produce, milk, and other foods. New apartment houses and office buildings were being built in the severe but pleasing style introduced after the Revolution.

There were no line-ups for bread and other foods at the state and co-operative shops, and one could buy the most delicious pastries for only five kopeks. There was a shortage of manufactured goods, but it was not to be compared to the shortage which

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came later after the "gigantic successes on the industrial front."

One is tempted to imagine what Russia might have become if the New Economic Policy had been continued. As early as 1924 the "Scissors Crisis" (the disproportion between the price of manufactured goods and agricultural produce) had split the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks into left and right factions.

Disagreements began over how much to take from the peasants for industrial development, and ended in the bitter controversy over collectivization. With the aid of Bucharin, Tomsky, and the others on the right who maintained that any attempt to force the pace of industrialization would destroy the stimulus to labor, Stalin had overcome Trotsky and was soon to exile him and the rest of the left opposition. Once rid of the Trotskyists, Stalin, in 1929, was to wipe out the right opposition and embark upon an ultra-left policy of forced collectivization and intensive industrialization.

The USSR was soon to become a country of starved peasants and undernourished workers, cowed and whipped by fierce punishments to toil endlessly for a state which could not provide them even with enough to eat. But, unfortunately for my own future, I

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saw the USSR during the brief period of prosperity which began in 1924 and ended in 1928.

In September 1927 I returned to England full of enthusiasm and prepared to tell the world of the wonders of the Russian socialist fatherland. I left the Independent Labor Party, joined the Communist Party, and addressed meetings all over England.

I admitted that the standard of life in Russia was lower than in the Western capitalist countries; but I explained the need to accumulate capital for industrialization and demonstrated how, because there was no capitalist class to exploit the workers, the burden of saving was borne equally by all.

I said that there was therefore no such acute misery as in the era of Britain's industrialization in the early nineteenth century, and that all Russians were enthusiastically collaborating in constructing socialism. I felt that the gates opening upon the road to Paradise had been unlocked to mankind, and all I had to do was to help convince the workers of my own country of the need to overthrow the capitalist class and join up with the USSR.

Looking back on that distant time, I now wonder, did I really believe it? I suppose I did, or I should never have thrown up my

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job in the capitalist world and gone off with my husband to take part, as we thought, in the construction of socialism.

Arcadi Berdichevsky, who became my husband in 1928, was a Russian Jew, who had studied at Zurich University and emigrated to the United States in 1914. In 1920 he had quit a good job in New York to work for the Soviet Government in London in their trading mission. He was not a Bolshevik, but had been a member of the Bund, the Jewish Social Democratic party in Russian Poland, where he had lived before he went to study in Switzerland.

Arcadi knew less about Soviet Russia than I did since he had spent his whole time in England since 1920. But he knew the old Russia too well not to perceive the naïveté of the picture I painted of the USSR. Nevertheless he was a sincere Socialist and believed as I did that a new and better world was being created in Russia. He wanted to take part in the building of the new socialist society.

We knew that material conditions of life would be hard, that living space was difficult to obtain, and that the conveniences, the comforts and pleasures, which he had for many years enjoyed abroad, were not obtainable in Russia. We also knew that, since

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he was not a member of the Communist Party, he could never rise to the highest positions in the Soviet state.

In 1923 Arcadi had been asked to join the Party, but he had the typical intellectual's feeling that as he had played no part in the Revolution, he could not join now that the fighting was over. Also, he had something of my brother's distrust of adherence to any creed or dogma. He worked with and for the Bolsheviks, but he was not prepared to subscribe entirely to their philosophy.

Arcadi had reached a stage in which neither his personal life nor his comfortable "bourgeois" existence in London as a well-paid Soviet specialist satisfied him. He had a wife and a young son, as years before in New York he had married the daughter of a well-to-do Jewish family of Russian extraction. They had become estranged when he gave up an income of \$600 a month in the United States to work at Arcos for \$150.

By the time I knew him, Arcadi's monthly salary had been increased to \$500. But his wife, Anna Abramovna, had neither understanding nor sympathy for his political views and could not see why he was not satisfied with a comfortable home, a pretty wife, and a secure job. To the last she never understood why he had left her for me since,



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as she told her friends, I was not pretty and would never make him comfortable.

Arcadi and I knew that we loved each other after only a few meetings, but his separation from Anna Abramovna was a long and painful business. In January 1927 he asked her to divorce him, but she begged him to wait until she could join either her brother in New York or her sister in Paris. She said she could not bear the thought of their friends in London knowing he had left her. Later it became clear that she hoped all along that his feeling for me was a temporary infatuation and that if they continued to live in the same house he would return to her.

Arcadi tried without success to obtain a visa for Anna Abramovna to go to the United States but eventually secured a visa for France. However, by that time he himself was being expelled from England, and unfortunately for her own future she insisted on following him to Moscow. Since I had remained in England to finish my work, she continued to hope he would change his mind. When I finally came to Moscow they were divorced.

Too inexperienced fully to appreciate Arcadi's difficulties, I had rebelled at his long delay in freeing himself to be with me.

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I felt that he should either leave his wife at once or give me up. I knew that leaving his son was very difficult for him, but I failed to understand that the ties between a man and a woman who have loved each other are hard for a sensitive man to break when the woman tries with every means at her disposal to maintain the old relationship.

Moreover, in leaving his wife, Arcadi was making a break with the "bourgeois" life he had lived since finishing his studies in Switzerland. For him I was a symbol as well as the companion in the new life in socialist society which we both expected to lead. Nearly ten years later the OGPU deprived me of the letters Arcadi had written to me. But by chance one he wrote during this difficult period of our relationship remained hidden between the pages of a book. I quote from it here as revealing a little not only of Arcadi's state of mind, but also as showing his attitude toward the Communists with whom he had decided to throw in his lot:

"Darling Fredochka:

"I suppose you are right in your own way, your brutal way, and that I shall never be able to satisfy you as to the validity of my reason for acting in the way I do.

"I shall not pick a quarrel on what you

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say about my playing about with the idea of living a different sort of life; desiring to go on the same way as before and a number of other things read at the bottom of my heart. There is no use to argue about things on which we can never agree, and I shall not appeal to you to reverse your decision until I can tell you that the way is clear for my giving you as much of myself as you can desire.

"I love you and I cannot and shall not believe that everything is over until you refuse to come to me when I shall ask you to do so on the strength of changes in my family life. There are for me two possibilities only in the future: either I shall embrace fully to the extent of 100 per cent the creed which will keep me going and make me forget you, or I shall accept it partially as I have done until now and you will be my beloved comrade in fighting all doubts which will arise. Nothing else is possible and the desire to go on the same way as before is death, which I do not feel I am ready to accept."

In September 1927, while I was in Russia on my first visit, Arcadi was suddenly told by the British Home Office that he must leave England at once. He thought his expulsion was due to the indiscreet and fervent letters I had sent to him from Russia, but it

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probably was because the chairman of Arcos had detailed him as a trusted "specialist," to be one of the few Soviet employees allowed to remain on the premises when the British Home Secretary, Joyson-Hicks, raided the Arcos offices in June 1927.

Although I was flattered to think that I was regarded as a dangerous revolutionary by the British Home Office, it was a great blow to have Arcadi expelled. I was very much in love, but I never for a moment thought of giving up my work in England to go with him to Berlin where he was stationed for the next nine months.

I visited him in Berlin during the 1927 Christmas vacation but, so seriously did I take my political work that when, in February 1928, he was allowed to come to London for ten days to represent Arcos in a lawsuit, I did not give up one single evening to him. I was then campaigning as the Communist Party's candidate in the London County Council elections and was speaking either to indoor meetings or at street corners every afternoon and evening.

Meanwhile I was earning a living, with the indulgence of C. M. Lloyd, my Director of Studies, as the holder of the Ratan Tata Research Fellowship at the London School of Economics. I also took Workers' Educa-

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tional Association classes, reviewed books, and wrote articles. I was making a good living, and my mother had inherited a small income from her father.

Although being a Communist was a handicap, my academic distinctions and the tolerance which distinguishes most English universities ensured me a secure and pleasant career. But I scorned the fruits of past years of hard study and never paused to regret the life I was leaving. The study of history could not satisfy. I yearned to take part in making it.

My fellowship came to an end in June 1928; Arcadi was in Russia but expecting to be sent to Japan, so I joined him in Moscow. Japan was the one country I particularly wished to visit, since my research work at the London School of Economics had concerned Eastern competition with the Lancashire cotton industry. This may sound dull but for me it meant a study in modern imperialism.

I had chosen the subject immediately after having written an M.A. thesis on the trade guilds of the later Roman Empire, because I thought there was a parallel between the effect of slave labor on the conditions of free labor in the ancient world, and the effect of colonial labor on Western labor

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standards in the modern world. In the course of my studies I had become interested in Japan and wished to see that strange semi-feudal, semi-modern imperialist state. If we could not yet live in Moscow, I was glad to get a chance to go to the Far East.

This time no smiling delegation met me at the Moscow station, and no luxurious quarters at the New Moscow Hotel awaited me. Arcadi took me to a tiny room, not more than fifteen by twelve feet, with a single bed, a chest of drawers, and two straight chairs. We did not even have a table, and I used to cook and iron and write on the window sill.

But the *kvertira*, or flat, was clean, and there was only one family in each of the four rooms. For Moscow that was not too bad. Unfortunately the room was not ours, but only lent to my husband for a few weeks. During the three months we lived in Moscow we moved twice.

Arcadi's salary was 300 rubles a month. Since we were expecting to leave for Japan, I could not take a regular job. We just managed to live. Our rent was 50 rubles. Meals at a cheap restaurant cost a ruble each. But bread was still cheap; and butter, when obtainable, about the same price as in England, with the ruble stabilized at fifty cents.

Cigarettes were our greatest extravagance

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and difficulty. At the end of the month I used to cart bottles out to sell, or rake through our pockets for forgotten kopeks, to raise the price of a meal. We were very happy. Discomfort and comparative poverty do not matter much so long as one has faith. And we both still had faith. I wrote to my mother:

"I feel sometimes that having found Arcadi is too good to be true. . . . I feel that the fact that we have been able to be happy together in these conditions augurs well for the future. We have begun life together in the worst material conditions instead of the best. . . . All the same, we both look forward to the day when we have a bed each and spoons and knives, and a bath and toilet of our own."

I was kept busy for a time finishing a translation from the German, begun in England, of the *Illustrated History of the Russian Revolution*, but I found it very hard to work that summer.

I attended the sixth Congress of the Comintern as a translator, listened to Bucharin from the visitors' gallery and saw Michael Borodin, back from China, walking in the corridors, already disgraced but still a romantic figure. I thrilled at the sight of Comintern delegates, white, black, brown and

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yellow, from every corner of the globe assembled in the socialist capital, visible witnesses of the "Unity of the Workers of the World."

Even in those days I had some deviations which is the Communist Party expression for "heresy." I thought of Trotsky as the greatest leader, and my Communism was essentially internationalist. But I never dreamed that Stalin would have the power to destroy all that Lenin and Trotsky and the other Old Bolsheviks had created. Nor had I any inkling of the fundamental cancer at the root of the Marxist doctrine. You believe what you wish to believe, until experience bangs your head against the wall and awakens you from dreams founded on hope, a misreading of history, and ignorance both of human psychology and science.

At last, after the OGPU had fully satisfied itself concerning my husband, he obtained his passport to go to Japan for the Commissariat of Foreign Trade. We left early in October, in the chill wet Russian autumn, with the first signs of coming hardships already visible in Moscow.

For some weeks I had been spending more and more time chasing after food supplies from one shop to another. Rationing had not yet been enforced, but the peasants were re-



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fusing to sell their produce in return for money which could not buy them the clothing and other manufactured goods they required. Russia was on the eve of the Calvary of forced collectivization.

### III

## *Honeymoon in the Far East*

WE STARTED our journey from Moscow to Siberia in a compartment for two, traveling in "soft cars," as second class is called in Russia. Unfortunately the Soviet Russian railroads do not trouble to separate men and women in making reservations for sleeping cars even for foreigners or top flight Communist officials.

Madame Anikeeva, wife of the Soviet Trade Representative in Japan, happened to be on the same train, and very much objected to sharing her compartment with a strange man. So we reluctantly agreed to be separated and let Anikeeva share the humbler compartment with me while Arcadi removed himself to the Pullman. However, she was a very nice woman and we had a pleasant journey.

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My greatest problem was to hide from Anikeeva the fact that the Comintern in Moscow had entrusted me with secret papers to take to China, and to invent a convincing story to explain why I was going to leave the train at Chita in Siberia to travel later to China alone, instead of directly to Japan. I managed it somehow but she must have suspected the truth.

The day before I left Moscow I hunted in the shops for a corset in which I could hide the papers in approved secret service style. I was extremely uncomfortable, but the thrill of conceiving of myself as a real revolutionary, helping to fan the flames of world revolution and liberate the "oppressed colonial workers" sustained me even through the ordeal of being corseted for the first time in my life.

All I remember of Chita is the intense cold, and the memorials of the Decembrists, the 150 exiled revolutionaries of 1825 who had dreamed of liberty, equality, and fraternity under the Iron Tsar, Nicholas I.

Only later was it to be borne in on me how mild had been the tyranny of the Tsars compared to that of Stalin. All those nineteenth and early twentieth century revolutionaries whose lives were spared and who were allowed to live in Siberia with their

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families were in exile, it is true, but for the most part not in chains nor herded in concentration camps. They were able to escape abroad with ease if they were so minded. Today in Stalin's Russia such humane and civilized treatment of political opponents is unheard of.

I was looked after in Chita by a little OGPU man who had formerly been a sailor on American boats, and whom I was to meet years later in Moscow at the Comintern. He was the sort of person who loves being conspiratorial for its own sake, and his manner of putting me on the train two days later, from the tracks instead of the platform, into a specially reserved compartment, should have aroused the suspicion of the Japanese or Chinese spies, if there had been any.

I went through a bad half-hour at the Manchurian border. A German on the train remarked to me at the passport and customs-control office, that the system was to watch the faces of the travelers rather than to search their baggage carefully. A row of huge White Russian guards stood behind the Chinese customs officials staring at the passengers. I had an innocent face and a British passport, and they would need to have been very suspicious to search the person of a British subject. My papers remained

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safe "in my bosom," as the old novels would have said.

The Comintern, with the inefficiency characteristic of all Russian institutions, had been unaware that the fighting going on in North China had stopped passenger traffic on the railway to Peking, and that I would therefore have to get to Shanghai by sea from Dairen. The money the Communist International gave me for my journey was insufficient to meet the extra expense of waiting in the hotel at Dairen for passage on the crowded boats, and I had hardly a cent of my own.

So in order to save enough to exist on in Shanghai for the ten days I planned to stay there, I economized in Dairen by eating only one meal a day. I took the table d'hôte mid-day dinner at the Yamamoto Hotel and ate all through every one of its six or seven courses under the astonished and amused eyes of the Japanese waiters.

Eventually I got a ship to Shanghai and delivered my documents. To do that I had to go to the Palace Hotel and telephone to a certain business office, ask for a Herr Doctor Haber, and tell him I had brought the samples of silk hosiery. I enjoyed it all immensely, especially as I was allowed two days later to come and meet some of the

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Comintern agents in Shanghai, who plied me with questions about happenings in Moscow which, in my innocence, I was unable to answer.

The agents I met, who were for the most part either Americans or Germans, were, if not Trotskyists, at least extremely unhappy revolutionaries. They had witnessed Stalin's callous and cynical sacrifice of the Chinese Communists in 1927 and were watching with dismay the beginnings of his transformation of the Comintern into a mere sub-office of the Russian National State.

For a couple of weeks I lived a double, or rather a triple life in Shanghai. I spent part of my time as a serious academic investigator of conditions in the cotton industry, other hours as the guest of "British Imperialists" at luxurious dinner parties and dancing or going to theatres with them; and yet other hours in the secret meeting places of the Comintern's agents.

It was part of the Comintern game that I should mix with the "bourgeoisie," and appear quite innocent of revolutionary activity; and my cotton industry investigations were in any case absolutely genuine. I should not have been much good as a conspirator if any hard task had been assigned to me. My English upbringing and my character un-

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fitted me for deceit, and my conception of a Communist was one of an honest and bold revolutionary. I was too eager to argue with the capitalists about what I believed to be the rottenness of their system, and the cruelty of their exploitation of colonial peoples, to have been an underground worker.

Thinking on one occasion to pour oil on the waters agitated by the views I had expressed, I told a Shanghai dinner party that I was doing some correspondence for the *Manchester Guardian*. This was true, and I thought it should establish my *bona fides* in the capitalist world. However, all values are relative. To my mind the *Manchester Guardian* signified the capitalist press, but to my compatriots in Shanghai it was "that Red rag," the paper for which "that awful fellow Arthur Ransome" wrote.

This book is not about my adventures in the Far East, so I will pass over the year I spent in Japan with my husband. It was the happiest year of my life. We were in love. We had no money worries, for my husband was earning what seemed to me the princely salary of \$500 a month. I was investigating Oriental labor conditions, calculating costs of production in the cotton industry, studying Japanese economics and politics, doing a series of well-paid articles for the *Manches-*

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*ter Guardian Commercial*, and writing my first book, *Lancashire and the Far East*.

Japan, however, gave me my first experience of a police state. Happy as I was under its blue skies, enjoying harmonious companionship with the man I loved, the shadow of the tyranny under which the Japanese lived kept my revolutionary fervor alive. Moreover, what my brother used to call my Puritan conscience soon made me restless. Surrounded as we were by poverty and oppression I had a deep conviction that it was wrong to be living comfortably and enjoying the greatest happiness which life can give, life with someone I loved more and more dearly as the days passed.

My letters to my mother expressed both my wonder and joy at my great happiness and my inner misgivings. I wrote that I could never have believed ten years before that life could be so complete and beautiful, but that my happiness was too great to last; that I must do something to deserve it. I must come back to England and work for what I believed.

Of course, no one knows his real motive. Perhaps it was not really my feeling that no one has any right to great personal happiness so long as the majority of mankind starve and toil without joy. It may have been



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love of power or the desire to make my mark in the world, which is the same thing as love of power, which impelled me to leave Arcadi and return to work in the Communist Party in England.

Also, it may have been the feeling I expressed in another letter to my mother, the feeling that Arcadi's love for me was founded upon his conception of me as a revolutionary, an intellectual, an independent woman, not a mere wife. I felt that if I lost myself in his love I might lose it, that I must somehow continue being what I had been when he began to love me.

Today I regret nothing more in my life than not having savored my happiness to the full and lived out the brief period Arcadi and I might have had together before we were engulfed in a hell of disillusionment and suffering in Soviet Russia. Today, I not only know that the gods are jealous gods, but that the only way to cheat them is not to be afraid of them.

To be alive at all is wonderful, and to have known, even for only a short while, the greatest happiness which life can give—to love and be loved utterly—gives life a savor even if it has ended in tragedy.

Although Arcadi knew he would be terribly lonely, he encouraged me to go back to

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England. For he, even as I, believed in what the Webbs call "the vocation of leadership"—that is, the duty of the Communist to sacrifice personal happiness to political work. Yet we had already seen something in Japan of what Soviet society is really like.

The intrigues, the calumnies, and the factional struggles which went on in our small Russian colony of employees at the Trade Representation and the Embassy in Tokyo should have taught us what to expect in the USSR. But we ascribed these jealousies in the Russian colony to the "intellectuals." We believed that in Russia the proletarians ensured a cleaner atmosphere.

Moreover, both the Ambassador, Troyanovsky, and the Trade Representative, Anikeev, were decent men. The same could be said of my old acquaintance Ivan Maisky, at this time Counselor of the Embassy in Tokyo. But his wife, Maiskaya, and Madame Anikeeva were at daggers points. A telegram had to be sent to Moscow to settle the delicate question of precedence at Embassy dinner parties and Japanese state functions between the wife of Maisky, and the wife of Anikeev, the Trade Representative.

As I remember it, the question was settled in Madame Anikeeva's favor, but the whole

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Russian colony was split into factions by the antagonism between these two women. They were fairly evenly matched, because although Maiskaya was a member of the Party and Anikeeva was not, Maisky had not joined the Bolsheviks until 1924, whereas Anikeev was not only an Old Bolshevik but also of proletarian origin, having once been a factory worker.

Anikeeva being both a beautiful and an intelligent woman, became a sort of First Lady, in spite of Maiskaya's qualifications. Troyanovsky's wife, who later accompanied him to Washington when he became Ambassador to the United States, was an unassuming lady, and played no part in the factional fights of "Red society."

Troyanovsky's first wife had been a Bolshevik when he was a Menshevik, and the story was told that during the civil war she had condemned her husband to death when he was brought before her as a prisoner. Lenin himself had talked Troyanovsky into joining the Bolsheviks and saved him from the death sentence imposed by his wife. I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, as whispered to me in Tokyo. But at least it explained Troyanovsky's choice of a non-political, rather colorless lady as his second

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wife. It is more pleasant to have a wife not likely to shoot you because of your political beliefs.

Soviet society cannot be described without some account of the human factors. Russian women are just as prone to social discrimination, pride in their social status, love of fine clothes and admiration, as women in "bourgeois society." Soviet society has its hierarchies and its jealousies and is *not* composed of simple-minded, ardent revolutionaries with red cotton handkerchiefs on their heads, intent on constructing socialism regardless of personal advancement and the material comforts such advancement brings.

The simply dressed men and women who march in the demonstrations of the proletariat for the newsreel cameras and the admiration of foreign tourists, are most of them longing to change places with the boyars of Communist bureaucracy who watch them from the reserved seats in the Red Square.

Back in England I threw myself into the work of the British Communist Party, and tried to bury in my subconscious the growing suspicions concerning Soviet socialist life which had been engendered by my year in Tokyo, and by the fortnight I had spent in Moscow on my way home at the end of 1929.

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I campaigned for the British Communist Party among the textile workers in Lancashire and for the Communist candidate for Parliament at a by-election in Sheffield. I became a member of the Industrial Committee of the Party in London, wrote articles for Communist publications, and a pamphlet on "What's Wrong with the Cotton Trade."

My husband sent me money to live on, and I didn't take a penny from the Communist Party, even for my articles and pamphlets. I studied the works of Marx and Lenin, conscientiously and thoroughly, and tried to explain in simple language the basic tenets of Marxism to make them understand that only through the unity of the workers of the world could living standards be improved and unemployment eliminated.

In speaking to the Lancashire cotton operatives and writing for them, for the first time I came up against the basic dilemma of the Marxist revolution, and also against the obstacle of the Comintern's cold and selfish indifference to the troubles of the working class, or its fate outside of Russia.

How could I convince the Lancashire cotton operatives that they should refuse to allow the cotton industry to be rationalized, refuse to work more looms, and go on strike

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for higher wages, when they knew as well as I did that the immediate result of such action would be more unemployment through the loss of markets to Japan and the other competing countries?

To my mind it seemed clear that the basic need was to explain Marxist theory, to make them understand the meaning of "workers of the world, unite" by showing that if all textile workers in all countries got together in one organization they could establish higher wages for all.

I tried to make them understand that the capitalist system, based on production for profit, inevitably doomed them to increasing poverty now that other countries besides England were industrialized, and workers in the East with lower standards of life competed against them.

But now I came up against the Comintern, which was pursuing an ultra-left policy and insisting that agitation and agitation alone, was the task of the Communist. We were ordered not to make theoretical explanations, nor to waste our time or energy in exposing the dynamics of capitalism. We were only to foment strikes; to tell the workers to strike and strike whatever the consequences!

The Comintern, in fact, was not concerned

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with the livelihood of foreign workers; it wished only to weaken the capitalist countries by continual strikes and the dislocation of economic life. The sole objective of the Communist International was the safety of Soviet Russia, and it recked nothing of the interests or sufferings of the workers.

One day in Blackburn, the great weaving center of Lancashire, an elderly textile worker complained bitterly to me that it was all very well for the paid officials of the Communist Party to get themselves arrested for deliberately and unnecessarily holding meetings where they obstructed traffic, but how could we expect men with families to do so, especially since it was an utterly useless performance?

Of course, he did not know how proud Communist Party members were if, when they went to Moscow, they could boast that they had gone to jail in the class struggle. Such an accomplishment might be held to wipe out the stigma of their non-proletarian origin.

Finally I got myself into trouble with the Politbureau of the Party in London by writing an article which the editor of the *Communist Review* had inadvertently allowed to be published. I had been reading Lenin's writings of the "Iskra period" and had dis-

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covered that he had condemned the "Economists," who maintained that the intellectual has no role to play in the Party and that the socialist idea can spring "spontaneously" out of the experience of the working class.

Lenin had insisted that the ordinary worker, by the experience of his daily life, develops not a full revolutionary class consciousness but only that of "a trade-unionist." Clearly, to my mind, in this period of declining markets for Britain, the workers' trade-union consciousness was likely to impel him to accept wage reductions and join with the bosses in attempting to recapture their markets. I did not, of course, foresee that this would lead all Europe to the development of increased nationalism and Germany to the horrors of National Socialism.

But I dimly perceived that unless the Marxist conception of international working-class unity could be put across to the workers, they would unite with their employers against other countries. We have since seen how Hitler and Mussolini roused their people to fight under the slogan of the proletarian nations against the "pluto-democracies."

Although my article was buttressed by quotations from Lenin, I was told by my Communist superiors that I had deviated



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seriously from the Party line by maintaining that theory was of primary importance and that the intellectual, accordingly, need not play at being a proletarian, since he had an important part to perform in bringing knowledge of socialism to the working class. I was not directly accused of Trotskyism, but I was held to be slightly tainted with heresy.

Nevertheless at this stage of my Communist experience I did not have enough sense to see that nothing good would come out of Soviet Russia and that the foreign Communist parties were already corrupted and impotent. I had a great respect and liking for Harry Pollitt, Secretary of the British Communist Party, who had encouraged me and backed me up, and prevented the little bureaucrats in the Agitprop department from sabotaging my pamphlet and my Party work.

To this day I find it difficult to understand how this British working-class leader of nonconformist traditions came to subordinate his conscience and sacrifice his personal integrity to become a tool of Russian tyranny. The fact that Pollitt led the British Communist Party deluded me into thinking that it was still a revolutionary working-class party seeking to establish liberty and social justice.

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After a year's work in England I went to Moscow, Arcadi having written that he would join me there from Japan. Before leaving England I spent a few days with my brother on the yacht in which he was preparing to sail across the Atlantic and on to the South Seas. He wanted me to sail with him at least as far as Spain; but I was, as usual, driven by that nervous sense of urgency which has so often made me miss the greatest pleasures in life.

I expected Arcadi soon to reach Moscow from Japan, and, much as I loved sailing, I felt I could not just dash off like that to no purpose.

My brother and I were more intimate those last days, sailing down the English coast to Cornwall, than since our childhood. His skeptical outlook on life, his avowed lack of any exalted motives, and his insistence on both the joyousness and futility of life, now seemed to me less reprehensible than a few years before.

The same Norse sagas and Greek legends which had inspired me to dreams of human liberty through the economic reorganization of society, had led him to throw up his job in London to sail to the South Sea Islands, of which he had dreamed since childhood. Perhaps his dream was as worthy and no

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more futile than mine. This I would not yet acknowledge, but at least I had grown tolerant enough not to reproach him.

In the night watches, sitting together on deck under the stars, Temple warned me of the certain disappointments which awaited me. He knew the motive forces of my life better than I knew them myself. For me, as he realized, the concept of human freedom formed the axis of my socialist beliefs.

I was in revolt against tyranny and oppression—not, as in the case of so many of those who have accepted Stalin's tyranny, a craving to lose myself and my reason in a universal brotherhood. In my mind Pericles' funeral speech, Shelley's, and Swinburne's poems, Marx's and Lenin's writings, were all part and parcel of the same striving for the emancipation of mankind from oppression.

Temple foresaw that I would not be able to accept and condone a new kind of oppression, even if tyranny wore the mask of socialism.

"You will probably end up in a Siberian prison, my dear," he said. "But so long as you don't deceive yourself, they will not break you. Only don't ever be a hypocrite to yourself. That is the only real sin against the Holy Ghost."

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Temple sailed away from Newlyn Harbor toward the setting sun one golden September evening. We never saw each other again, for he died five years later in Fiji. During those years we were about as far away from each other as one can be on this earth. But I remembered his farewell warning to me against hypocrisy. You can preserve your inner integrity anywhere, even under Communist tyranny, if you do not seek escape in illusions and deceive yourself in order to be comforted.

## IV

### *Spider's Web*

AFTER HURRYING to Moscow to meet Arcadi late in September, I was disappointed to learn that my husband had been ordered to make a trip to China before coming to Russia. He did not join me until the following January. I had three months alone in Moscow during which I was at last made aware of what manner of society and government was being created under Stalin.

Yet I did not have the sense to dash off to China to stop my husband from entering the country. How often in future years was I to regret my stupidity! Or was it some last lingering hopes which led me to allow him to walk into the spider's web from which he could never again be extricated?

For it was soon made clear to me that if Arcadi returned to Russia, he would never

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get out again. Almost all the non-Party specialists had been recalled from abroad and now no passports were issued except to those of unimpeachable proletarian origin or to Communist Party members of long standing.

The first great purge had begun, the purge which was to kill off so many of the old intellectuals—the engineers, technicians, scientists, and administrative personnel who had been educated under the Tsarist regime, but had not run away after the Revolution, and had been working loyally for the Soviet state ever since the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

The Commissariat of Foreign Trade, anxious to keep a few qualified men abroad, wanted my husband to go to the United States to work at Amtorg. They cabled him to proceed straight to America from Shanghai, and offered to pay my fare to join him in New York via Hamburg.

Arcadi insisted upon returning to Moscow. He wrote to me that after his long exile he wanted to play his part in the great creative work going on in the USSR. I realized later that he wanted to drown his doubts in work and to merge himself in the collective human effort with a subconscious desire to atone for his long years of divorce from the

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socialist movement, and for the individualism of his nature.

Arcadi was an acutely sensitive person, reserved and somewhat unsocial by nature. He concentrated his love and affection upon very few individuals and rarely lowered the barriers of his reserve to any human being. For that reason, perhaps, he desired in a way which I often found difficult to understand, to merge himself in the stream of humanity, and to share a fraternal passion with those who, as individuals, repelled his fastidious standards of behavior.

A keen sense of humor and a quick wit saved him from being a misanthrope. He could always ward off threats to his privacy by a joke and, although his wit could be sharp and cutting, he directed it too frequently against himself for it to arouse rancor.

Arcadi had convinced himself that it was immoral to continue to be a privileged intellectual working and living in comfort abroad and that he ought to come home and suffer with the mass of his people. Although a Jew, he was also a Russian; and Russians appear to have a kind of mystical urge to immolate themselves, to castigate and humble themselves.

Russians seem to be the least individual-

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istic of peoples and the most prone to servility and a kind of mystical masochism. Arcadi was essentially Western in education and ideas, but even he suffered for a while from the Russian martyr complex, so incomprehensible to those of us born and brought up in England or the United States.

His tragedy was that, although he shared the Russian intellectual's desire for self-immolation upon the altar of an ideal and the Russian desire to merge his individuality in a totality, he did not share the Russian aptitude for servility and sycophancy. He was unable to fawn upon the great or wheedle favors from the Communist Party bosses.

Thus he could never adapt himself to Soviet conditions of life. Yet he would not, or could not, break away from Russia. He preferred working at a low salary without privileges to abasing himself sufficiently to obtain food supplies, a flat, and other perquisites. He was too much of a Westerner to fawn and beg; too much of a Russian to cut loose and escape.

*Narcomvneshtorg*, the Commissariat of Foreign Trade, thought so highly of Arcadi's ability and knowledge, and was so certain that if he returned to Moscow the OGPU would not permit them to send him abroad again, that they eventually offered me my



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full fare to China, and thence to the United States, if I would go and persuade him to sail for San Francisco. But I knew Arcadi too well to believe I could get him to change his decision.

Perhaps my English capacity for straight thinking had been dulled by the gray and leaden Moscow atmosphere. The terror, which now began to oppress my spirits, prevented my writing to him fully and frankly.

Even if I could have got a letter smuggled out to be posted in England, I had no other address than his office in Shanghai, where his mail probably was opened and read by an OGPU agent. If I told the truth about conditions in Russia, he might not believe me. Anything I wrote critical of the Soviet Union would endanger his life if after all he decided to return to Russia.

Although I was aware in my subconscious that our dream was already lost, I clung to my illusions. I would not as yet admit even to myself that Russia had already gone too far along the road to bureaucratic tyranny for there to be any hope of turning back to the ideals of the October Revolution.

Nor could I, being English, really accept the fact that if later we wished to leave Russia, my husband would not be able to do so. I sent telegrams, but I did not go to China.

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I waited in Moscow hoping against hope that he would not come, yet not daring to admit, even to myself, how fearful I was of the future should he come.

During this period I wrote two letters to my mother in England. In the first, I said:

“Even Pickman—(an old Party member whom I had known in London) says it is just as well for Arcadi to spend the coming year in America. The fact of the matter is that the economic position is so strained that there is no confidence in anyone, and the conditions of work for all intellectuals are very difficult indeed. Arcadi is one of the very few competent people left in whom they still have confidence.”

A month later I realized it was dangerous to give even a hint of conditions in letters sent through the mail, and I sent a note through the hand of E. F. Wise, the English adviser of *Centrosoyuz*, the Central organization of the Russian Co-operatives. Wise was not a Communist and I was fairly confident he would not show my letter to anyone, but I was not quite sure. So I tried to write guardedly but to convey my state of mind:

“Only workers from the factory or men of proletarian origin are now allowed to go abroad. Whether Arcadi realizes the posi-

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tion or not I do not know. . . . The way business is now being run is hopeless. They put absolutely useless people into leading positions just because they are of proletarian origin. I suppose it can't go on and there will be a reaction soon, but in the meantime it means the most terrible waste and inefficiency.

*"Things are very different from two years ago. Perhaps, dear, in the end I shall go back to being a historian. Only now am I beginning to learn a bit about mankind and its queerness. To understand a little what is meant by Menschen sind Menschen. To understand that life is not so simple, so to speak. I am still pretty certain of my main ground but the carrying out of what is wanted is not so simple."*

I added a postscript not so much, I imagine, to reassure my mother as to allay suspicions should my letter fall into the hands of the secret police. I wrote: "Dear, you know it is the most interesting country in the world to be living in, and one must be philosophical enough to take the bad with the good, so long as one believes that in the end there will be more of the latter."

Life in Russia as I was soon to find out, consisted in learning the painful lesson that there was far more bad than good, and that

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the good was disappearing so rapidly that there was soon nothing but bad.

While awaiting Arcadi's arrival from the Far East I lived with his sister, Vera, and her two sons in their tiny two-room apartment in the *Dom Politkatajan* on Pokrovka Street. This was the House of the "Political Hard-Labor Prisoners"—meaning those who had done hard labor in Siberia under the Tsar.

Vera had been sent to a Siberian prison from Lodz in Poland while still in her teens. First, like Arcadi, a member of the Bund, she had become a Social Revolutionary in Siberia. She had joined the Bolsheviks in 1917, and had fought against the Japanese in the Intervention. Vera had been imprisoned by them but escaped.

Vera's life had been one of adventure, hardship, and sacrifice. But now she had a good job and was full of confidence in the future. She radiated happiness. Her first child had died as a baby on the long trek in the snow across Siberia to the prison camp. Trying to shield it from the cold, she had suffocated it in her arms.

Her second son, Shura, survived the rigors of prison and exile, and was now a youth of eighteen studying engineering at the Mos-

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cow University. Vera also had an adopted son, Grischa, whom she had taken in infancy from a poor peasant family in Siberia which had so many children it could not feed them.

The two boys were devoted to each other and to their mother. They called her Vera and treated her as an elder sister. Vera's husband had died fighting in the Red Army, but I gathered he had been a bit of a ne'er-do-well, and little love had been lost between them.

Vera and my husband had been very close to each other in their youth. They had a step-mother who treated them cruelly, and they both became revolutionaries at about the same time. Curiously enough, the harsh treatment they experienced in childhood and which made Arcadi so distrustful of individual human beings did not affect Vera. She was very sociable and trustful of others and almost childlike in her faith.

When they had met in Moscow in 1928 they had not seen each other for twenty-two years. It was typical of that meeting that Arcadi, when he saw Vera approach his office desk, merely said: "Hello Vera, how are you?" She had tears in her eyes and embraced him in front of everyone. During those twenty-two years Arcadi had studied

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in Zurich, worked in business in England and the United States, and acquired a Western manner and a truly English reserve.

Vera's life had been entirely different. She had had little education, had participated in the revolutionary struggles of two decades, had known hunger and cold, and in general lived a life of great hardship. She had often been in danger, but she had always lived among "comrades," and never struggled on her own in an alien new world.

Her attitude toward Arcadi retained something of the flavor of their youth. He was the educated clever elder brother who had instructed her in Marxist theory long ago in Poland. Although he was not a Party member, she felt no superiority.

Her fate and Arcadi's were to be similar. She was arrested and disappeared in 1937, a year later than Arcadi, when most of the inhabitants of the Hard Labor House were purged because their revolutionary pasts made Stalin fear that they might turn their revolutionary techniques against him.

Vera was very proud of Shura, who, in Siberia before they came to Moscow, had been elected representative of all the *Comsomols*, members of the Young Communist League, of the Irkutsk region. But at the time I lived with them in Moscow he was

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causing her much anxiety. He did not conform sufficiently at the university, was apt to ask awkward questions at Young Communist meetings, and was in danger of being expelled from the *Comsomols*. His mother's reputation and influence had so far prevented this, but she was always begging Shura to hold his tongue.

Shura once said to me: "How simple life was in Vera's youth and how good it must have been. One was a revolutionary and one struggled against Tsarist tyranny. But now . . . ?"

What Shura meant was what I often felt myself. Those very impulses of generous youth which in the old days had led so many of the students to become revolutionaries, now impelled them to protest against Soviet tyranny and injustice. Such protest today means being denounced as a counter-revolutionary.

Vera was a product of the romantic past; Shura was a product of the disillusioned present. Whereas Vera knew little about theory, Shura was being educated in it, and the writings of Marx and Lenin impelled him to see more clearly than his mother the difference between theory and practice in the Soviet Union.

Marx and Lenin were still available to all

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in unexpurgated editions but later the government saw to it that the originals were hard to come by except for high Communist Party members with a ticket to the Party Bookshop.

The Kremlin now permits only carefully edited extracts from the books of Marx and Lenin for the education of the masses. Stalin's speeches and writings have taken their place.

Before I left Russia, Shura had ceased to take any interest in politics. Like so many of the best elements among the Soviet youth, he had become a cynical young man, philosophically accepting life as it came, and no longer yearning for the fulfillment of the forgotten hopes of his early youth. Intent only upon earning enough to keep his young wife and child in reasonable comfort, he spent several years as an engineer in the Far North where the pay was highest.

With her Jewish sense of family solidarity and her Siberian tradition of hospitality, Vera unquestioningly gave me shelter and shared her food with me. Having no job, I had no bread card and nowhere to get a meal. A post was offered me at the Marx Engels Institute, but only if I signed a contract for three years. Since I did not know whether or not Arcadi and I were going to America, I



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could not take it. I got translating and editing work to do and wrote some articles, but this did not produce a food card.

Those were cold and hungry days. In the morning we had a meal of potatoes, bread, and herring. Unable to swallow the raw salted herring which is the most nourishing food available to the poorer Russians, I subsisted on bread and potatoes until 5 P.M. when the four of us shared the dinner for three to which they were entitled from the communal kitchen of the apartment house. It cost 65 kopeks (32 cents) a head and usually consisted of cabbage soup and chopped meat balls or pike, that heavy and unappetizing member of the shark family, which seems to have been the only fish to survive the Revolution. We never tasted butter, but the two boys, as industrial workers, got a monthly allowance of two pounds of margarine.

Twice a month Vera received the family's meat ration. She would then telephone to her friends, and invite them to come and eat it with us. She made delicious Siberian meat dumplings in soup; and for one evening we would eat to repletion.

She never thought of making the meat last several days. Vera had the old exile's feeling that we should share all good things

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with our comrades, and like most Russians she was generous and had no disposition ever to save anything.

There would be vodka and sweet Crimean wine, hard candies, and tea to follow, and we would sit around the table for hours talking and singing. I had a glimpse of the kind of people and the atmosphere of the old revolutionary days. These men and women, all of them former exiles and not yet corrupted by the privileged position the revolution had given Communists, were the salt of the Party.

They were simple people, hearty and jolly, and full of faith. Times were hard, but they thought this was only a temporary phase. Mistakes were being made, but they would be rectified and socialism would soon be created. How could it not be so since "The Revolution" had been victorious? In contrast to the Communists of higher rank, they were comradely in their personal relations and were not acquisitive.

For all her revolutionary past, Vera was very house-proud, orderly and feminine. Her little flat was as clean as a pin. She hung lace curtains at the windows, she looked pained if a single object were out of place, she dressed neatly, took great pains to arrange her flaming red hair becomingly,

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loved nice clothes although she had none, and told lies about her age. These lies were very naive. If she had been only as old as she said, she would have been a prisoner in Siberia and mother of a child at the age of fourteen.

She was the soul of hospitality, emotional and tender, always full of vitality, good-tempered and sensitive to human suffering. Later I was to meet the type of Communist who would roughly turn a starving child from the door and warn me that I must on no account give anything to these little beggars since they were probably the children of Kulaks. But Vera would always give a piece of bread or sugar to the destitute, although she knew that as a "good Bolshevik" she should not.

Besides Vera, Shura, Grischa, and myself there was usually at least one other guest sleeping in our tiny rooms. Siberian friends passing through Moscow, or temporarily homeless in the capital, came to sleep on the floor or in one of the boy's camp beds.

We ate in the kitchen, which was also the bathroom. Getting a bath was a matter of luck, since we never knew at what hour and on what days the water would be heated for the hundreds of flats in our building. We

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were among the privileged. Rarely again in Moscow was I to live in a house where hot water was supplied even once or twice a week.

Vera and the boys spoke only Russian. Since I knew only a few words, we communicated at first largely by signs. I made more rapid progress in the language than at any later period and learned to make one word do the work of many.

For instance, I can remember once wanting to convey to Shura the idea that I could see he was depressed. So I said to him "bad weather here" pointing to his head and heart. And he understood me and gave me the word *nastrayenia* for "mood." Sometimes my limited vocabulary caused jokes at my expense as when I said over the telephone I desired a man, thinking I was saying that I wanted to speak to him.

Vera's greatest friend, Nina, was often with us, a woman of peasant origin, also a Communist Party member but hard put to it to support her two little girls living with their grandmother in the village. Her husband had deserted her years before, and she received no alimony.

Nina knew a few words of English to help out our conversation, and I got very friendly with her and later visited her village. Plain

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in appearance and dressed almost like a man, she was gay and kind, full of enthusiasm and vitality, and particularly interested in the Communist movement abroad.

Our life in the two small rooms was jolly and friendly and had for me a little of the flavor of adventure and that precious atmosphere of comradeship which was so rapidly fading elsewhere. Evenings at the flat kept my spirits up, but my days were dreary. I wished I had stayed in England until Arcadi arrived from the East; I wished even that I had sailed with my brother across the Atlantic as he had suggested.

Since my association with Russia began, I had continually been hurrying off somewhere and then been forced to wait weeks and months with nothing to do. It had been so in 1928, and now it was so again. I had rushed away from England without even waiting to arrange publication of the book I had written for the London School of Economics. I had refused the joy of sailing at least as far as Spain with Temple; and here I was pacing the streets of Moscow with nothing to do.

Early in November I spent a few days in Leningrad where Dementiev, a friend of Arcadi's just arrived from Japan, was working. We went outside the town to look at the

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sea—a cold gray sea and a flat shore—but the sea nonetheless. I wished more than ever that I were with Temple on the high seas, since after all I could have gone with him instead of waiting so long for Arcadi in Russia.

Nothing is more depressing than autumn in Moscow. It rains and rains. The streets are half-flooded, for the gutters don't work properly. It is cold; and there is only occasional heating of the houses. We were expected to keep the windows shut all the time and preserve the warmth for three days until the house management put the heating on for another twelve hours.

As I walked the streets the sadness of the atmosphere, the drab, grim-faced crowds, the miserable peasants selling a few rotten apples or pickled cucumbers at the street corners, the homeless children, wet and hungry, depressed my spirits.

I spent a good deal of time going to offices inquiring about the flat which had been promised to us, and for which we had already paid \$500 in foreign currency and far more in rubles. I was also negotiating for a Russian language edition of my *Lancashire and the Far East*, getting translation and other work, and seeing English and Ameri-

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can comrades at the Comintern, the Marx Engels Institute, and the Lenin School.

Already the world of these foreign Communists in Moscow seemed far removed from my own. Most of them lived in the Lux Hotel and had no worries about food or shelter. They knew nothing of the life of the ordinary Russians, and spent their time discussing theory, organization, and foreign affairs, or gossiping about each other within their own closed-off world.

I felt a growing barrier between them and myself, a barrier caused by the constant need to put a half-hitch on my tongue, as they say in Devonshire. For them, all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, the USSR. To question it even when the evidence was completely to the contrary was dangerous heresy.

The only man at the Lenin School who dared to express some doubt to me was a Yorkshire miner whom I had known in England. There he had been unemployed but had lived in a three-room house with his wife and one child. In Moscow no employed worker dreamed of owning more than two rooms, and felt himself very lucky if he had one.

I had other friends, Russians whom I had

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known in London at Arcos and at the Russian Trade Representation, now occupying high positions in Moscow. The old friendliness persisted, but I thought they must be aware that I was no longer the naïve enthusiast of two years before. I even felt a certain embarrassment on their part at the difference between the idealized picture of Russia they had painted for me in London and the stark reality of the *Soviet Byt* (way of life).

My conversation was guarded, but probably I failed to display the required enthusiasm when they held forth about the sacrifices "we are making" for the industrialization of the Soviet Union. They were no fools, nor was I. They must have known that I perceived that high Communist Party functionaries were getting the best of everything and that all the sacrificing was being done by the dumb crowds, the dragooned peasants and the helpless workers.



## V

### *Soviet Social Register*

THE VERY FIRST week I was in Moscow as a resident I discovered that my old friends the Plavniks had supplies of good food when they invited me to dinner. Plavnik and his wife were old Socialists, who had spent a large part of their lives in exile in Germany, and were essentially Europeans with a civilized outlook and standard of personal behavior and honor. They were therefore apologetic about receiving more and better food than the workers. But others were not ashamed at all.

In fact, a year or so later I heard wives boasting of the special stores at which they were entitled to buy since this showed the high rank of their husbands. I soon realized that there is social discrimination in Russia. The Soviet Social Register is written

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on the ration cards of the favored Communist bureaucracy, the new Russian nobility. I learned of the existence of exclusive shops catering to privileged high Party officials and called "closed distributors," which sold foodstuffs and clothing unobtainable elsewhere, or only to be purchased on the "free market" at exorbitant prices.

Other closed distributors with less attractive wares were opened later for lower grades in the social hierarchy, for second-class Party functionaries and non-Party specialists and for the workers in heavy industry. There came to be, roughly speaking, the following grades: First, what Russians call the Kremlin people, commissars, chairmen of big trusts, members of the Central Committee of the Soviets and of the Party—all the highest Communist Party members.

Next came the OGPU shops which served food almost as good and as plentiful as the shops for the *Kremlovsky* (Kremlin) people. Then, *Gort A*, for high officials—all Party men—and for a very few specially favored scientists and engineers. Next, *Gort B*, for the "middle class"—that is, Party men of lower rank and highly qualified non-Party specialists.

In addition there were well-stocked shops for the Red Army officers. There were also

the various closed distributors for the factories producing capital goods. These varied greatly from place to place. In some the workers could obtain the official ration of butter and milk and meat. In others none of these luxuries were ever on sale. But the *Kremlovsky* shops, *Gort A*, and *Insnab* (the Foreigners Store) were always well stocked with food and clothing unavailable to the average Russian.

My husband, as a specialist, eventually received a book for the *Gort B* shop allotting him two pounds of meat and two pounds of butter a month and a small ration of other food and some clothing. But this was not until more than a year after his return. His rations from *Gort B* were about the same as Vera received in her "Political Hard Labor Distributor." Typical of the kind of joke that I heard in Moscow was a story about Vera's shop where it was said that jam was on sale with a sign over it reading: "For sale only to regicides."

As my husband remarked, the Communist Party people and the other ex-revolutionaries were now drawing dividends on their investment in the Revolution years before.

Gradations of social rank in Russia went according to our food ration much as in the ancient Byzantine Empire the salaries of

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imperial officials and generals were reckoned in measures of corn, wine, and oil.

Only top-flight Communists were favored by ample supplies of food and clothing. This device of Stalin's, which directly violated both Lenin's formula of the Party maximum, and Marx's injunction that the official was to be paid no more than a worker, was designed to keep Party men loyal to him personally.

Any deviation from the Party line involved expulsion from the Party and the loss of these precious food supplies. It also meant the withdrawal of many other privileges awarded in kind and not in money: use of an automobile, the pick of housing accommodations, special hospitals, and an exclusive medical service reserved for the new aristocracy alone.

The closed distributors also enabled the government to discriminate in favor of the aristocracy with the scarcest goods, such as fruits, fresh vegetables, cocoa, chocolate, and butter and eggs. This system had the additional advantage of permitting the Soviet Government propagandists at that time to tell the world that Communist Party members never received salaries higher than the Party maximum of 300 rubles.

Actually the salaries of high Communists

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were worth ten to twenty times as much as those of the non-Party specialists, who in theory were supposed to be getting more, and than those of the skilled workers, who were supposed to be paid about the same as the Party functionaries.

I soon ran into the snobbishness of the Communist Party members. Friends from London who had known my husband and me there would try to ask me to parties without him because he was not a member of the Communist Party. Or if he were invited and went he was made to feel a social inferior.

Although I had been very poor in England, I had never in my life before had any feeling of social inferiority. Although I myself was treated as an equal because I was a member of the British Communist Party, I was infuriated at the attempted social ostracism of my husband, who, as I knew, did work of far greater value than most of the Party functionaries and got much less than they did from the "socialist state" for doing it.

Before Arcadi arrived, Mrs. Khinchuk, wife of the Soviet Trade Representative in Berlin, whom my friend Jane Tabrisky and I had known in London, asked her one day how I, a Party member, had happened to marry beneath me. Not that she was a Party

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member herself, but any Soviet woman not too unattractive or of too bad social origins endeavored to secure a Party man for a husband.

Just as a "bourgeois" woman in capitalist society is expected to marry into her class and not into the laboring class, so in Soviet Russia you were *declass  * if you married outside the Communist Party. A woman was debarred from entry to the "best society" if she were not either herself a member of the Party or married to a member.

Mrs. Khinchuk was the perfect example of the new Moscow socialite, Soviet snob and hypocrite, but she was only one of thousands. She did no work, she shopped and visited in an automobile which she did not "own," but which with its chauffeur was at her disposal day and night. And she loved to hold forth about the sacrifices "we are making."

Jane Tabrisky, who was staying at the Khinchuk's flat while awaiting the room promised her by the Marx Engels Institute, got so disgusted that she often came to Vera's in order to get away from the society of the privileged. Khinchuk himself was decent and hard-working, but as I had already perceived in Japan, it was the wives of the Bolsheviks who led the parade in the degen-

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eration of the Party and showed so obviously the characteristics of the *nouveau riche* society then coming into being.

Jane, who had been a member of the British Communist Party since she was sixteen, who had been secretary of the London University Labor Party when I was chairman, and who had also been in the same Communist Party local with me in North London, had arrived in November to take the job at the Marx Engels Institute which I had had to refuse. Her arrival in Moscow was my greatest joy while waiting for Arcadi in the autumn of 1930. She was an old and real friend to whom I could speak freely, and in Moscow this was a blessing above all others.

## VI

### *Revival of Serfdom*

JANE AND I learned rapidly. Collectivization of agriculture, and the Five Year Plan in Four Years, were no longer matters of abstract theory to be discussed *ad infinitum* in Party meetings in the comfortable bourgeois world of London. They had become painful realities of our existence and of the lives of those around us. They meant starvation for many and near starvation for the majority.

Collectivization and industrialization meant the formation of a privileged aristocracy as cut off from the masses of the people by the conditions of their lives as the nobles of the *ancien regime* in France.

Our lives were spent mainly with ordinary "middle class" Russians and what was going



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on around us could never again be for us just a remote social experiment. It was a terrible and moving reality involving untold suffering for millions whom we could not regard as human guinea pigs in a social laboratory, as did the "Friends of the Soviet Union" abroad.

We knew, of course, why there was famine in Russia, and the situation which had led up to the "liquidation of the Kulaks" with all its attendant cruelty and dislocation of the country's economy. In 1927 and 1928 when I had received my first false impression of Soviet Russia, there had already been an economic and political crisis.

The New Economic Policy, allowing limited free enterprise, which had brought prosperity before Stalin stopped it, had also almost led to the revival of capitalism in Russia.

By 1926, nearly two-thirds of the grain on the market was being sold by a mere six per cent of the peasants, the Kulaks. These Kulaks were selling to middlemen; and a new "petty bourgeoisie" of shopkeepers, restaurant operators, and small industrialists had cropped up like mushrooms after a rain. The state could no longer lay its hands on enough grain to export even a small quan-

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tity to pay for the importation of machinery. Handicraft industries were reviving to serve the local needs of the village.

The peasants were creating their own self-subsistent economy outside the sphere of control of the Soviet state. The working class in the state industries suffered, and the elected local Soviets came more and more to represent the interests of the peasants. Stalin in 1928 was still going with the tide.

Anxious to secure his own power by enlisting the support of the right wing of the Party against Trotsky, he had contemplated in 1925 giving each peasant a forty years' tenure of his land. As against this "denationalization" of agriculture and stagnation of industry, which in truth must have led to the USSR becoming a semi-capitalist country, Trotsky proposed collectivization—not the collectivization at the point of the bayonet which Stalin was later to enforce, but gradual collectivization through the grant by the government of credits and machinery to those poorer peasants who would voluntarily join a collective farm. This could, however, be accomplished only if the richer peasants were heavily taxed to finance the collective farms and to enable the state to import machinery for the manufacture of

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farm implements, for the erection of power stations and for industrialization.

Heavier taxation of the Kulaks would not only stunt the growth of this new capitalist class, but would enable the government to produce more manufactured goods, lower prices, and break the strike of the peasants. The farm population was responding to the shortage of industrial goods by working less, consuming more of their own produce, and disposing of the rest of the Kulak middlemen, who, instead of selling it to the government, used it to support local handicraft industries. But, said the right opposition, if you bear down too hard on the Kulaks we shall have war between town and village.

The difference of opinion between the right and left wings of the Bolshevik Party on the policy to be pursued was distorted by the struggle for personal power.

Stalin had little theoretical knowledge, and in any case was not in the least concerned with the rightness or wrongness of a policy. He wanted absolute power, and he saw his way to get it by crushing Trotsky and his left opposition with the aid of Bucharin and the right wing, and then to eliminate the right opposition by pursuing a policy far more left than Trotsky's. The final result was that the worst features of the

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policies of both sides were adopted by Stalin as the Party line.

Stalin brought about super-industrialization on a scale never dreamed of by the left opposition, accompanied by the destruction of the elements in the Bolshevik Party most capable of carrying out such a policy, accompanied by accumulation of capital for industrial construction by robbing the peasants, and accompanied by the liquidation of the technicians and administrative personnel who alone could have made the new industries function efficiently.

By 1928 the truth of Trotsky's prophecies had become so obvious that he and his followers had to be eliminated if he were not to take Stalin's place. The decreasing food supplies in the towns were convincing the proletariat that Trotsky was right in predicting the return of capitalism. The workers of Leningrad appear to have been behind Trotsky almost to a man. The Kulaks were by now holding up food for the cities to force a rise in the price of grain. Trotsky and the left opposition leaders were arrested by the OGPU, which Stalin controlled, and imprisoned or exiled.

Stalin was able to do this because he had the support of Bucharin, Tomsky, Kalinin, and the rest of the right wing of the Party.

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These men had no conception of Stalin's real intentions until it was too late. They were sincere, and none of them appeared anxious for personal power.

They were probably right in thinking that Trotsky's policies would have led to civil war between town and country and a revival of the horrors of the early Communist period. They did not dream that Stalin was planning a civil war far more bloody than anything Trotsky had desired, and to be carried out in such a fashion as to destroy all hope of socialism in Russia.

In July 1928, Stalin was still insisting that individual cultivation of the land must be supported, and collectivization would be a mistake. But by October Stalin had reversed himself and Bucharin, Rykov, and Tomsky were being condemned as bourgeois liberals who desired the restoration of capitalism. Stalin was preparing to sponsor an adventurist policy of super-industrialization, complete collectivization, liquidation of the Kulaks, and savage coercion of the peasantry.

The Kulaks were holding the government to ransom; less and less food was procurable in the towns, and the workers began to suffer. Grain stocks were seized from the Kulaks and even from the middle peasants.

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Those they had employed found themselves without work, since the Kulaks naturally saw no point in cultivating large farms if the produce was to be confiscated.

By December 1928 the food shortage was making itself felt even in Moscow, the most favored of Russian cities. Just after we left for Japan bread cards were introduced, unemployment increased, and real wages fell. Forced buying from the peasants at an unremunerative price and heavier taxes on the Kulaks could not solve the problem.

The peasants hid their grain or refused to sow it and murdered the Party functionaries who seized their crops. Military force might confiscate the food in the villages. But it could not, so long as individual farming persisted, coerce the peasant population to work for the benefit of the state.

Coercion and intimidation were impracticable unless the peasants could be herded together like the workers in the factories. Collective farming was therefore ordered by decree—not the voluntary pooling of resources by the poorer peasants, encouraged by state credits and able to produce more than individual farms by being supplied with machinery, which Trotsky had advocated—but collectivization by the knout.

Not collectivization with the purpose of

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immediately increasing the productivity of the land by means of machinery and modern methods of production, which obviously could not be introduced on small individual holdings, but collectivization with equipment suitable only to small-scale farming, with the object of getting all the peasants together under the control of the secret police so that they could be forced to labor.

In November 1929, Stalin announced the end of individual farming, ordered the liquidation of the Kulaks as a class, and the establishment of collective farms everywhere and for everyone. He had decided to solve the agricultural problem "in a socialist sense" by violence and terror.

If collectivization had been accompanied by a rapid increase in the supply of manufactured goods to the villages the peasants might perhaps have been reconciled to the new system. But Stalin had simultaneously inaugurated the Five Year Plan for industrial development, which concentrated all the resources of the country on the production of capital goods and armaments. The peasants were expected to work practically for nothing since the government could not supply them with clothing and other manufactures of prime necessity.

Then began the wholesale murder of the

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Kulaks by the Soviet state, which is almost unparalleled in history for its cruelty. I use the word murder deliberately, for although the Kulaks were not lined up and shot, they were killed off in a manner far more cruel. Whole families, men, women, children and babies, were thrown out of their homes, their personal possessions seized, even their warm clothing torn off of them. Then, packed into unheated cattle cars in winter, they were sent off to Siberia or other waste parts of the Soviet Union.

Some survived to start life again and build farms in the waste lands into which they had been exiled. Women and children perished. Hundreds of thousands of peasants were herded off to the timber prison camps in the Arctic regions, to die like flies from hunger, cold and exhausting labor, whipped by the OGPU guards and treated like the slaves of Pharaoh or of an Asiatic tyrant.

Shura told me terrible stories of what was going on. He and Grischa had been sent on their vacation with other young students to help institute by these horrible cruelties a "socialist agricultural system" in the villages. A friend of Arcadi's who worked in the Timber Export organization made my blood run cold with his account of the merciless treatment of the political prisoners at



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Archangel where the ex-Kulaks in chain gangs loaded wood for export.

When the father of a Kulak family was arrested, all food in the house was confiscated, down to the last sack of flour. The wife and children were left to starve to death. Mothers sometimes killed their babies to save them from lingering death by famine. The story reported by Malcolm Muggeridge, then correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in the USSR, is typical of many of the gruesome tragedies of that terrible time.

A woman in a Cossack village in the Caucasus, whose husband was arrested and taken off to forced labor as a Kulak, had her last sack of flour confiscated by the OGPU officer, Comrade Babel. When he had left she looked at her three children asleep by the stove. There was no food and no hope of securing any. She got an axe and killed the children as they slept.

Then, after tying each child up in a flour sack, the mother went to town and reported to Comrade Babel that she had decided she ought no longer to defy the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and confessed that she had three more sacks of flour hidden away. Comrade Babel went back with her, along the snowy road, to her house. She took him up

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to the loft and showed him three bulging sacks. As he bent under the rafters to look, she killed him with the axe.

Of course the woman was shot, and Comrade Babel's heroic death "on the class-war front" was reported in Moscow newspapers. *Pravda* spoke of the "plots" of the class enemy, of the need "to root out mercilessly all hostile elements in the villages." The case was reported as one in which "a notorious counter-revolutionary, wife of an exiled Kulak, lured Comrade Babel to her house with false promises and murdered him in the loft with an axe."

Such incidents as these were not recognized as acts of blind revenge. They were represented as "symptomatic of the new tactics of Kulak elements" seeking to destroy the socialist state.

Fear of reprisals by the desperate, starving, expropriated peasants drove the Party to attempt to exterminate their victims. "We must destroy our enemies until not one is left," was the daily cry in the newspapers. An orgy of cruelty raged in the countryside. We must go back to the days of the Mongol hordes sweeping across Asia and eastern Europe in the thirteenth century, or to the massacres by the Assyrians in Biblical times, for an historical parallel with the Commu-

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nist "class war" against the Russian peasants.

Many motives, fanatical faith, fear, sadism, revenge, played their role in this horrible massacre of the innocents by famine and the firing squad. Jews who remembered old pogroms in the Russian villages, workers who had suffered under the Cossack whips in Tsarist times, gave vent to dusty and dim hatreds sanctified under the banner of the class war.

Earnest young men and women whose best instincts were perverted by orders given them by the Communist Party, convinced themselves that in depriving the peasants of their last stores of food they were helping to build a socialist society. OGPU and Red Army officers sent to carry on the "war on the agrarian front" feared that if they were not absolutely merciless they would be stabbed in the back on dark nights by desperate peasants.

The Kulaks, now declared enemies of the state, were in theory the exploiting peasants, those who rented extra land and employed hired labor, or who advanced money or seed at high rates of interest to the poorest peasants.

Kulak means a fist, and the word originally signified an exploiter and a usurer.

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Under Stalin the word came to mean any peasant who dared to oppose collectivization.

Long before the period of forced collectivization, the Bolsheviks had endeavored to break the solid front which the villages presented to the cities and the Soviet state, by promoting a class war in the villages. It was hoped that if some peasants could be set against others, it would be possible to break the solid opposition of the peasants to what they viewed as an exploitation of the agricultural population for the benefit of the city workers.

So in the New Economic Policy period, the state, which was encouraging the Kulaks with one set of decrees to "get rich" by producing more, was discouraging them by treating every prosperous peasant as a social outcast and inciting the poorer peasants against them. It was little wonder that the peasants brought less and less grain to the market.

In order to stimulate class warfare, the peasants were registered in three classes: *Kulaki*, *Seredniaki* (middle peasants), and *Bedniaki* (poor peasants). In villages where there was a dead level of poverty, the local Communists were nevertheless ordered to find Kulaks even where none existed.

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A story was told me of how in one village the local chairman of the Committee of the Poor exhibited a family of Kulaks quite in the manner of showing a family of lepers on whom the judgment of God had fallen. He regarded them with hopeless pity and said that all the troubles in the village dated from the time when the villagers had been compelled to divide themselves into the three classes.

When the query was put as to why the family was regarded as Kulaks, he replied that someone had to be a Kulak, and that this family many years before had owned a village inn. They no longer had it, but there was apparently no hope of their ever losing their status as a Kulak family.

If they should there would be no other family to take their place as the local Public Enemy, and for some reason unknown to anyone, the Soviet Government insisted that each village must produce at least one Kulak family to be hated and oppressed.

These *Kulaki* had no electoral rights, had to pay forty per cent of their miserable income to the state, and their children were not allowed to go to school. Thus Stalin used the technique of artificially focussing hatred on the innocent, which Hitler copied in the case of the Jews.

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In practice, since in many parts of the country real Kulaks who "exploited" other peasants were hard to find, the designation was applied to every peasant who was a little better off than his neighbors, to anyone who owned two horses and two cows, or had managed in some way to lift himself a little above the miserably low general standard of life in the Russian village. It meant that hard work and enterprise were penalized wherever they were found. What Tartar invasions and long centuries of feudal oppression had begun, the Soviet Government consummated.

The Russian peasant sank further into slothfulness and hopelessness. Since to raise himself above the level of his beasts of burden was now accounted a crime against the state, he worked as little as possible, and ate and drank whenever he could without thought of the morrow, which was almost certain to be worse than today.

The fecklessness of the Russian character was the result of Russian history, but it was left to the Soviet Government to make laws penalizing all who worked hard and took thought for the morrow. Its treatment of the best and most progressive elements among the peasantry might have been ex-

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pressly designed to prove the truth of the old arguments against socialism.

Precisely those peasants who had the knowledge, skill, and industry to raise Russian agriculture above its medieval level were liquidated. The collective farms were deprived of the men who could have made them function efficiently.

The army of city workers sent down to coerce the peasants and manage the collectives took far more from the villages in the shape of wages than the Kulaks had ever taken as profit. If, by allowing them a larger share of the produce than the other peasants, the Kulaks had been persuaded to run the new farms, instead of being killed off or imprisoned, the system might possibly have worked.

It was, of course, argued that the Kulaks were irreconcilably hostile to the Soviet state. But they had never been given a chance to be other than hostile. The government discriminated against them, reviled them, and instigated everyone to loathe them. Naturally they hated the Soviet Government. But to argue that they were irreconcilable enemies of the Soviet state is like saying that the Jews in Germany deserved what they got because they hated the Nazi Government which oppressed them.

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It was not only the Kulaks who were expropriated, exiled, or imprisoned. Except for the minority of landless peasants, all regarded collectivization as expropriation. Ordered by the state to pool all their property and to give everything up to the *Kolkhoz* (collective farm), and faced with exile to Siberia or with slave labor in the concentration camps if they refused to join the *Kolkhoz*, the peasants naturally killed their pigs, their sheep, their cows, and their chickens, and ate them or sold the hides and the meat for money, which could be hidden. By 1934, the number of horses in Russia was half what it had been in 1929, and the sheep and pigs less than half.

Trotsky described the process in the following words:

"Twenty-five million isolated peasant egotisms which yesterday had been the sole motive force of agriculture—weak as an old farmer's nag, but nevertheless forces—the bureaucracy tried to replace at one gesture by the commands of 2,000 collective farm administrative offices, lacking technical equipment, agricultural knowledge, and the support of the peasants themselves."

Trotsky called Stalin's program a blind, violent gamble. The left opposition had never advocated anything so drastic, so





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manded by Stalin. Some thus became moral perverts, sadists who enjoyed the tortures which they were ordered to inflict on the helpless victims of the OGPU.

The war on the Russian peasants was more brutalizing than war against another nation, for the peasants were unarmed and defenseless. The present generation of Communists was brutalized in youth by the pogrom conducted against the peasants.

Meanwhile the workers in the factories found themselves suffering almost as great a degree of privation as in the years of civil war. Not only did Stalin's violent agrarian policy drastically reduce the amount of food produced in Russia; his industrialization plans caused food and manufactures to be exported from Russia to pay for machinery imports. Butter and eggs disappeared from the worker's table and were dumped abroad. Meat and even herring became a rare luxury.

During my first year in Moscow it was believed that if once the peasants could be forced into the collective farms, the food problem would be solved. But, although by 1931 most of the land had been taken over by collectives, the peasants had not yet been coerced to work for the profit of the state.

Incentive was gone. Since they no longer

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owned the land, since intensive industrialization and concentration on the production of capital goods meant that the state had even less to sell them than before in the way of consumers' goods, and since the state virtually confiscated the grain by taking it at nominal prices, the collectivized peasants worked less than ever before.

They opposed the government by the same passive resistance as before the New Economic Policy was introduced, and sowed and reaped just enough to feed themselves. This fact, coupled with drought in the Black Soil region, reduced the harvest to a much smaller amount than in previous years. But the government nevertheless enforced its full demands, telling the peasants that it was their own fault if they were short of food, and leaving them to die of starvation.

A terrible famine set in, especially severe in the rich corn-bearing lands of the Ukraine. This time there was no food relief poured in to Russia from the United States as it was in 1922 under the leadership of Herbert Hoover, since the Soviet Government denied to foreigners that there was a famine.

Foreign journalists were not allowed to visit the South. All Russia knew what was happening; but the hacks of the foreign

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press, obedient to Stalin for fear of losing their jobs, sent out no word. Only a few brave and honest correspondents like Eugene Lyons of the United Press, William Henry Chamberlin of the *Christian Science Monitor*, and Malcolm Muggeridge, then correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, told the truth and were expelled from Russia, or put in a position in which they were ultimately forced to leave. Others followed the lead of Walter Duranty of the *New York Times* and denied the existence of a famine, until years later.

Foreign visitors, carefully shepherded by Intourist, and given huge meals in the hotels of the starving land, went home to deny the rumors of famine. I well remember the delegation from England in 1932 which included Mrs. G. D. H. Cole and various professors from London University. One of them, a lecturer at the London School of Economics, told me as we ate a bountiful meal at the New Moscow Hotel (at his expense) that it was all nonsense about the famine, for at Kiev he had been given caviar, butter, eggs, and coffee for breakfast! I had to let him talk, for I knew if I told him the truth and he repeated it, my husband would be sent to prison.

Stalin's utter ruthlessness won the day.

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The resistance of the peasants was broken. Since 1932 they have known that they will starve unless they produce the quota taken by the government and in addition enough to feed themselves. They have been forced to work on the government's terms. They have become serfs again. Their work on the collective farms is forced labor, and corresponds to the labor service rendered to his overlord by the serf in medieval times.

By 1935 it was recognized that the economic forces pulling Russia back to individual farming and private property were too strong even for a government maintained by naked force. The peasants were given permission to sell on the free market any produce they could spare from their own subsistence after the government had collected its quotas which were always very large. More important was authorization to cultivate a small allotment of ground to grow vegetables, fruit and sometimes a little grain. The peasant was also allowed to own a pig, a cow or a goat as his private property.

On this allotment he can work after hours for his own benefit. His labor on the collective farm produces a minimum for subsistence in good years. But since he knows that the government will always cheat him if it

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can, he has no incentive to increase the productivity of the land.

He knows that should the communal land be made to yield more, the state collections will be raised, or the amount set aside for capital improvements increased. Bitter experience has taught him that he cannot raise his standard of life, since a jealous government will in one way or another deprive him of all profit of his labors. Hence the veritable stagnation of Soviet agriculture.

In the following years the peasants naturally spent all the time they dared on cultivating the little personal plots of land, the produce of which they could eat themselves, or sell for their own profit. This budding of private enterprise was blighted by the government by a series of decrees in 1939.

These decrees declared that the peasant's private allotment had been losing its subsidiary character and in many cases had been converted into the main source of income of the collective farmer. Consequently work on the collective farms had been neglected.

Henceforth the maximum size of individually owned plots of land was strictly limited and a minimum number of days set during which the peasant must work on the collec-



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tural population is forced to sell its produce to the state has grown much greater, not smaller, during the past decade.

What collectivization has done is to make the state confiscation of crops by forced grain deliveries much easier. A small detachment of OGPU soldiers in each district can terrify the collectives into giving up the greater part of the harvest, whereas an enormous number of troops would be required to terrorize each individual peasant cultivating his own farm.

All the much-vaunted use of modern farm machinery imported or produced at tremendous sacrifice in the USSR has not increased the yield of the land or lowered the real cost of production. The tractors and other modern farm implements have not compensated either for the destruction of livestock in 1930 and 1931, or for the lost incentive of the peasant to labor.

The machinery paid for by the blood and sweat of a whole generation of Russians is often entirely useless because it has broken down and cannot be repaired, or partly wasted because it is not used to its full capacity. Neither the peasant nor the state has reaped any real benefit from the mechanization of agriculture concerning which the Soviet Union boasts so extravagantly.



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The net result of Stalin's socialism is the reduction of the standard of living of the Russian people, while increasing taxation to support the Communist bureaucrats, the secret police and the Red Army. The income from the bread tax has been the largest item in the revenue of the Soviet Government. The peasants, like the city workers eat less and are worse clothed than they were under the Tsar.

## VII

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JANE TABRISKY and I were not long in Moscow without sensing the terror then in full operation against non-Party intellectuals. Communist Party members still felt comparatively safe. They were not as likely to hear the fatal knock at the door in the night which meant that the OGPU had come to claim a victim.

Every specialist, however loyal and long his service, feared arrest, for the government was attempting to lay the blame for the food shortage brought about by its agrarian policy upon the wretched non-Party engineers, agronomists, technicians and administrators, scientists and professors. Like Hitler, Stalin sought scapegoats for the masses, so that they would not blame the ruling party for the shortage of food and

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clothing and houses to live in, or for the universal misery and disorganization of life.

They must be made to believe that "wreckers" were responsible, and lay the blame for their ever-increasing misery upon agents of the "foreign bourgeoisie" and Tsarist elements inimical to the proletariat and to the construction of socialism.

Hence the increasing arrests of the non-Party specialists. This term included not only engineers, professors, and scientists, but all the educated: accountants, technicians, teachers, doctors, and those with administrative experience, or knowledge of trade and finance.

Stalin, whose pathological hatred for educated men and women was as yet restricted in its operation to those outside the Party, was doing his best to liquidate the intellectuals as a class. This senseless terror, which struck down or demoralized men essential to any successful industrialization of the country, was perhaps as fundamental a cause for the failure of the Five Year Plan to raise the standard of life of the Russian people, as the forced collectivization of agriculture.

I remember the case of Arcadi's friend, a gentle, elderly Jew named Kipman, which illustrates both the cruelty and stupidity of

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the OGPU. He was arrested the winter of 1931 on returning with his wife from London, where he had worked for several years at the Soviet Trade Representation. He was accused of having embezzled 10,000 pounds.

My friends who knew him were certain that he was absolutely honest. It was moreover obvious that if he had taken the money he and his wife, who were both over sixty years old, would have stayed in London and lived on it for the rest of their lives. However, Kipman "confessed" to the crime and was sent to a Siberian prison for five years.

His wife, in spite of her age and failing health, struggled valiantly for years to get him out of prison. She appealed, she made representations, she produced proofs of the falseness of the charge. At the end of three years she succeeded in getting his case re-examined. It was then found that the money had, in fact, never been lost, but there had been a mistake made in the accounts for which Kipman was in no way responsible.

He was brought back to Moscow and set free, but a few days before he arrived his wife died, worn out by anxiety, poverty and her efforts to secure his release. I remember seeing Kipman in the *Narcomveshtorg Stovaya* (Dining Room of Peoples Commis-

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sariat for Foreign Trade) one day, white-haired, stooped, with lifeless eyes.

When I asked him later why he had confessed to a crime he had never committed, he said it was because the OGPU threatened to imprison his wife as well if he didn't, and had promised him to leave her free if he confessed. The ruin of the lives of these two innocent old people was typical of countless human tragedies.

I felt the prison house was closing in upon me. As it appeared more and more certain that Arcadi would come to Moscow my spirits sank. Whereas in 1927 and even in 1928 I had longed to live in the USSR, now I dreaded it. I was being rapidly initiated into the terror and the ghastly suffering of Soviet life.

Finally, one cold December evening Pickman brought me the news that Arcadi was already on his way and would be in Moscow by the end of the year. My heart sank. For a moment I had a vision of the future, saw us both caught in the web.

But I had to keep up appearances. Although my visitor was an old friend and a most decent person, I knew how dangerous it was to let even my best friends guess my real thoughts.

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So I smiled and said how pleased I was, offered him a drink, and together we "celebrated" Arcadi's approaching return. Shura could see I was unhappy and tried to cheer me up, but Vera rejoiced.

Early on New Year's Day, 1931, I met my husband at the station. Coming from the Far East he was numbed by the bitter cold of that snowy and windy January day. We met, not quite as strangers, but as two people who had to get to know each other again after nearly a year and a half's separation.

I was already on the road to utter disillusionment. Arcadi was determined to believe. We began life together, as before in one small room, as before loving each other, but invisibly separated by my lost hopes and the hopes he was determined not to lose.

I had begun working at the Comintern before he arrived. He took up work at Prom-export. Each evening I cut him with my cynical comments upon my futile work in the Comintern, and gibed at the marvels of Soviet "socialist" construction, which I said could better be called the construction of conditions for famine. He immersed himself in his work and closed his ears to my bitter criticism.

Our love was not dead, but the old intimacy was lost. We had come together largely

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as the result of shared beliefs, and both of us had put political duty before the pleasure of being together. Now we no longer had beliefs to share, and were not yet drawn to one another as the only refuge in a purgatory of our own blind choosing. The gaiety had gone out of our relationship, although later it was to return as a refuge from sorrow.

Meanwhile the Terror struck closer and closer home, carrying off to the concentration camps men with whom Arcadi had worked abroad, men whom we knew as loyal and selfless specialists. He could not believe them guilty of counter-revolutionary activity and sabotage, but he would not admit that their arrest was other than accidental, a mistake which would be rectified.

The daily struggle for food and the recurring search for a room soon absorbed all my energies outside my office work. I was brought down to the plane on which life is lived by most Russians, the plane of bitter primitive struggle for the primary necessities of life: food and shelter.

In that first year, before either of us had access to a closed distributor, I learned what the life of the Russian masses is like. I learned also to be a wife in its primitive sense. It was my job to keep my man alive

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by seeing that he was fed and had shelter. He worked so hard and so late at the office that I, with my regular seven hours of useless labor at the Comintern, took over the job of shopping, cooking, cleaning, and washing.

Of these domestic tasks it was the shopping which exhausted me. The search from shop to shop for food, the long standing in line to obtain our bread ration every evening, the bargaining with the peasants at the street corner in exchanging bread for milk became my real work.

The peasants, deprived of all their grain and fodder by a merciless government, wanted bread to feed their cows. There had developed a "new and higher form of economy" under the Soviets whereby the peasants produced milk for the townspeople in exchange for bread to produce that milk.

Hundreds of thousands of peasants near the cities of Russia spent at least half a day traveling to and from their farms and standing in the market or at street corners selling milk or a few miserable vegetables. To arrange that one of their number should do the selling while the others worked on the land was forbidden.

The seller would have been punished as a middleman, a speculator. Stalin had found a



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novel way to banish unemployment by forcing each peasant, with milk or other produce to dispose of, to spend the greater part of the day selling it to the consumer.

I managed to rent a room in a new flat on Novinsky Boulevard. The owner, once a sailor on the famous ship *Potemkin*, whose crew had mutinied in 1905, was working at the Soviet Consulate in London. His two daughters rented me a room at the "commercial price"—that is to say, I paid more for the one room than they paid for the whole flat.

This was usual in Moscow at the time, although the subletting of rooms and country houses by privileged Party members was not yet the source of *rentier* income it later became. Subletting was also done by non-Party people; but, since it was the Communist Party members who secured most of the new flats, they were predominantly the landlord class.

Jania, the elder daughter of our landlord, was typical of the girls of the new aristocracy. She dressed well, she enjoyed life, and she had a job. Her work, however, did not provide her with half her income. She not only let a room, but she sold at commercial prices the large ration of eggs, butter, and other "luxuries" which it was her father's

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privilege to receive as a member of the Moscow Soviet.

The fact that he was working and living abroad and had Jania's stepmother with him in London, did not mean that his ration was cut off. Jania drew eleven pounds of butter and a large number of eggs every ten days. Sold at commercial prices (about five times as high as the price she paid) these supplies produced an income equal to more than half her monthly salary as a clerk in an office.

Jania's flat was always full of young men in the evenings, and when I once remarked to her how popular she was, she replied seriously,

"Oh, no, it isn't that; they just all want to marry me because we have a flat."

Jania was a decent sort and honest. She made no pretense of admiring or believing in Soviet policies and eventually married beneath her. She was in love with a young engineering student who was not a *Comsomol* and could never be a member of the Communist Party, because his father, a highly qualified engineer, was of bourgeois background.

Years later I met Jania for the last time before leaving Russia. She was working in the Intourist office in Moscow where I

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bought my ticket to England. Very pale, very thin, all the gaiety and youth gone from her face, she was dying of tuberculosis and knew it.

Because she had married outside her class, her father no longer had anything to do with her. Jania and her husband and child all lived in one room. She had, of course, no hope of getting to a sanatorium, since neither she nor her husband were members of the Communist Party.

Our flat, on Novinsky Boulevard, was in an ultramodern duplex apartment house completed in 1930. It was built on supporting pillars like a lake-dwelling, and a broad covered way ran along the front of each story. One side of the house was all glass, and no doubt it would have been very healthy and hygienic and comfortable if there had been sufficient heating, or if only one family had inhabited each apartment. But to house several families, as most Russian flats do, it was most inconveniently built. There was a large studio-type room, in which the second room was an open balcony above. Only the third room had both a door and a ceiling, and so some privacy.

At first I slept in the hall-like room below, overlooked by Jania's sister above and unable to go to bed or to work when the lat-

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ter entertained her boy friends. When Arcadi arrived, I persuaded Jania to let us have the enclosed room with the door on the balcony.

The floors were of stone and we had no carpet. The only furniture was a single bed I had brought from England, a small table I had managed to buy, and three hard chairs. We kept our clothes in our trunks and our books and toilet articles on the window sill or on the floor.

Nevertheless, life on Novinsky Boulevard was the best we were to know for many a year. There was a bathroom with a hot-water heater, and there was a gas stove in the kitchen. Also, this being a house occupied by important Soviet officials, there was a communal kitchen where one could buy much better dinners than at Vera's.

Unhappily, Jania's father returned to Moscow in the summer of 1931 and we had to move. I was at that time in London arranging the publication of my first book, *Lancashire and the Far East*, which, originally accepted for publication by the School of Economics, had been turned down by Sir William Beveridge, the Director of the School, after my departure from England.

C. M. Lloyd, Director of the Social Science Department, had written to me that it

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could only be published by the School if I would modify my chapters on India. Rather than abate by a jot my indictment of British imperialism, I had gone to England to arrange publication myself, with the assistance of C. M. Lloyd.

When I returned to Moscow in September, 1931, Arcadi had moved into a very small furnished room near the Sukharevsky Market. For this room and the right to share the kitchen and bathroom with the landlord's family, we paid 100 rubles a month out of Arcadi's salary of 300 and mine of 275.

Our landlord paid only 45 rubles monthly rent for the whole three-room flat. Our rent was cheap as rooms went; many people had to pay more. It was a cooperative apartment house. This meant that the landlord had acquired it by paying monthly installments into a cooperative building society. Like most other owners of apartments, he rented one of his three rooms and so secured a return on the capital he had invested.

Being non-Party, he had had to wait years and pay several thousand rubles before getting his flat. Communist Party men, if not already in possession of a decent apartment built before the Revolution, and taken possession of during its early years, often se-

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cured a new flat without payment, or by only a year or so of membership payments to a Cooperative.

In any case, the Party men always had priority, and thus could secure the precious capital which a flat represented without a large previous investment. Most owners made a super-profit on renting rooms, but whereas the Communist Party member could charge anything the market would bear, the non-Party man was afraid of doing this, for he might be accused of speculating.

It was here in our room on *Trubnaya Ulitsa*, near the Sukharevsky Market, that I first witnessed the terrible exploitation of servants. Jania had done her own housework and so did I. But our landlord and landlady here had a "domestic worker."

She was, like nearly all Moscow servants, a peasant girl. She worked from 7 A.M. until nearly midnight, cleaning, cooking, washing, and standing in line at the shops. The latter occupation was the most strenuous part of her labors and the most painful. For to stand in line in the cold Russian winter when you have neither proper footwear nor a really warm coat is agony. This girl had neither. Nor did she eat the good meat or fish meals she prepared. She lived on soup,

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black bread, and cereals, with an occasional bit of herring.

At night she slept on the floor of the kitchen. The *Kazaika* (house mistress) cowed her, bullied her, and drove her. The girl was often in tears and always sad and miserable. When we asked her why she did not leave, she said she would be treated just the same anywhere else, and she couldn't go to work in a factory since she had no room to live in.

All through my stay in Moscow I found the same conditions for servants. In some of the old apartment houses I saw as many as five or six families all sharing one kitchen. A young Russian whom I had formerly known at the London School of Economics, and who lived in one room with his wife and child, shared a toilet and kitchen with 35 other people in the same flat.

Several of the families housed in one apartment would each have a servant. It was not uncommon for three or four servants to sleep together in the kitchen, side by side on the floor or on the kitchen table. Bugs ran over them at night, and the atmosphere was so fetid and foul that one hesitated to go in to boil water for tea or to wash.

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The employers of these girls were often little better off themselves. A family of four to a room, feeding poorly, would hire a servant mainly in order to have someone to stand in line at the shops for food. Even the limited rations called for by the food cards could not be obtained without a long wait; and this, together with foraging around for unrationed food occasionally available in the shops, was almost a full-time occupation.

The waste of labor entailed in the socialist fatherland by the hopelessly inefficient distribution system, and by the shortage of food and clothing, was such as to make it easy to believe that there could be no unemployment problem. If husband and wife both worked at a large enterprise and there were no children, a maid could be dispensed with since they could eat dinner in the *stolovaya* (restaurant) of the factory or office.

But if there were children, food must be found for them somehow. Party men of high standing kept maids to spare their wives labor, but the great majority of the families who employed domestic workers did so in spite of their poverty, or because of their poverty. Enough food for the children could be bought only if both parents worked; but someone must do the shopping. Hence the necessity of having a servant.



## *Arcadi Caught in the Web*

The terrible exploitation of domestic labor was in part due to the poverty of the employers, and in part to the exodus of peasant girls from the hunger-stricken villages. To be allowed to live in the towns and get some sort of a meal every day was to be incomparably better off than in the village, even if the girl had to work sixteen hours out of twenty-four.

Work in the factories (even if obtainable without close probing into why they had left the village and as to whether their parents were Kulaks) could not secure them a shelter. So they went to work as servants.

Servants were consequently easy to get and, being unprotected by Soviet law or by Russian custom, could be exploited mercilessly. There was no alternative for them except starvation, and they were practically slaves. On the other hand, they naturally had little moral sense. Their village world had been destroyed, they or their peasant neighbors had been expropriated and robbed by the state, and their religion vilified and reviled.

To be religious was tantamount to being considered counter-revolutionary. So freed of moral and religious inhibitions, they stole whatever they could lay their hands on. Russian housewives locked up every bit of food

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and kept a strict watch upon their scanty wardrobes.

It was typical of the relation between mistress and maid in the Soviet Union that when the German Communists, who still retained the socialist ideal of human equality, wanted their servants to sit and eat with them, they found themselves misunderstood.

"The *Kazaika*," the servants said, "is so afraid of our eating too much that she forces us to sit with her at table to keep an eye on how much food we consume."

Servants were still treated like serfs by the Russians even when their conditions of life allowed them to give some elementary comforts to their domestic employees. Party men who secured large flats rarely provided their maids with a room of their own to sleep in. Even a family with four or five rooms at its disposal made the servant sleep in the kitchen, or at best in a kind of open cupboard, constructed over the front door in the most modern flats especially for servants to sleep in.

For me the servant problem was at first insoluble. I could not drive people to work, and, being what the Russians called a "petty bourgeois idealist," I felt it was indecent to lock up our bread, sugar, and butter in a

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cupboard, and periodically to search the domestic worker's basket or suitcase for stolen goods.

So after a couple of months during which a large part of my precious foreign clothing was stolen and our food supplies mysteriously disappeared, I went back to doing the housework myself. The difficulty was that we could never be sure whether the servant or the landlady had stolen our missing stuff. Each accused the other. I thought it was quite likely to have been the landlady, but, since she was already eager to turn us out of our room and we had nowhere to go, I could do nothing.

We were paying "only" 100 rubles a month for our room, and by this time it was becoming easy to let rooms for 150 or 200, so we were no longer welcome. Arcadi was making the 300 ruble Party maximum, but he had no Party privileges. I also was now earning 300 rubles, having become a "textile specialist" at Promexport. All Arcadi's savings from his years of work in England had been spent to buy a room in Moscow for his former wife and son.

Out of our joint earnings, we now had to support Anna Abramova and the boy Vitia, so there was little left to feed ourselves after 100 rubles had gone for rent. As yet neither

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of us had a closed distributor but we did have first category food cards like industrial workers.

So we each got two pounds of bread a day, half of which we exchanged for milk from the peasants on the street corner. We also received some sugar and two pounds of meat a month per person. Everything else had to be bought on the free market at high prices.

Our only solution was extra work. Editing and translating were easy to come by, but Arcadi worked late at the office every evening, and I couldn't do Russian translations without him. Luckily, I got an advance of 2500 rubles for the Russian edition of *Lancashire and the Far East*, but we paid 1600 rubles of this into the Housing Cooperative I had joined in 1928.

In October we had managed to buy *putofkas* (accommodations) in a Rest House at Gagri in the Caucasus. Here in the Land of the Golden Fleece, where Jason found Medea, we enjoyed our first relaxation together since Japan. Gagri is one of the loveliest places in the world and by its blue sea with the Caucasian mountains rising behind us we could almost forget the pushing, crowded petty life of Moscow.

In the Caucasus there were very few signs of the "construction of socialism." At Gagri

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there were ruins of a castle of Mithridates whom Great Pompey conquered and who had fled from the Roman legions to die in the Armenian mountains to the south. There was also a small Byzantine church of the Fifth Century which had withstood the ravages of the many races which had passed to and fro along this land bridge between Europe and Asia.

It was a hungry holiday but a happy one. We used to supplement the meager food supplied by the Rest Home by eating large quantities of walnuts, the only reasonably cheap food obtainable in the few shops of the small town. Occasionally we bought grapes but they were very expensive. The sea was still warm enough for swimming and the mountain walks were beautiful and gave us a feeling of release.

Back in Moscow, securing a flat again became our main preoccupation. Since Arcadi's hopes of getting the rooms long since promised, and long since paid for, were fading, we began to concentrate on home hunting in my name instead. Since I was still a member of the British Communist Party, I had a better chance of securing something. Unfortunately, however, I had become a member of the Railway Worker's Housing Cooperative up in *Grusynski Val*

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near the Alexandrovsky Station, and railway workers at that time were not a favored category.

I had joined it originally in 1928, through MOPR (International Class War Prisoners Aid) with which it was affiliated. The apartment house this Cooperative was building progressed very slowly because of lack of materials, labor, and money. I had a friend on the board of the Cooperative, a Polish Communist Party member called Lofsky, whom I met when I was a delegate to Russia in 1927, and who had since been off on secret Comintern work in South America. He advised me to present the Chairman of the Cooperative with an English woolen sweater and promised to keep an eye open in my interest.

The art of securing the flat to which payments entitled us consisted in haunting the premises of the Cooperative at the time when flats were being completed and about to be allocated. If around and about at the right moment a flat might be obtained. Otherwise unless the person were an important Communist Party official he would be overlooked no matter how high his priority number might be.

Unfortunately, Arcadi was always work-

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ing so hard at the office that he couldn't hang around his Cooperative and kept on being passed over. My own hopes faded when Lofsky was again sent abroad. I never got my flat through all the succeeding years, nor was I able, when at last Arcadi got his, to secure the reimbursement of the 4500 rubles I had paid down years before.

For years every letter I wrote to my mother referred to our housing problem—the hope for an apartment in the spring, then in the autumn, then for the following year. At first I believed the promises; but after two years I was writing that I had given up having any confidence in Russian promises.

The first lesson the Soviet citizen has to learn is that promises and contracts mean nothing at all. The government cheats its citizens all the time in big things and little, and every official behaves in the same way. Only foolish foreigners, newly arrived in Moscow, think that the letter of the law, or the written contract, or the spoken promise have any meaning in Russia.

There stands out in my memories of life in Moscow, a picture of the snowy street outside our apartment house along which I went to the office. Some construction work

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was going on near by, and every morning I saw carts full of bricks or wooden planks drawn by thin, miserable horses.

Often the carts got stuck in the ruts in the thick snow, and the drivers dressed in rags of sacking whipped the horses mercilessly. The breath of the struggling horses and men formed a thick steam in the cold wintry air. I used to hurry along trying not to see the sores on the horses nor to hear their panting. Horses and men alike were starved, and the sufferings of the animals were only one degree worse than those of the wrecks of human beings who drove them.

It was said that on the collective farms the peasants deliberately worked the horses to death so that they might get meat to eat. An inhuman system made men treat their beasts as cruelly as the government treated them, and with as little thought of preserving life. Cold, snow, misery, and want were the background of life in Russia.



## VIII

### *I Learn About Soviet Hospitals*

I HAD my first intimate experience with the free medical service and the hospitals which foreign visitors to the Soviet Union describe in such glowing terms, during my second winter in Moscow.

I was pregnant, and I was foolish enough, on New Year's Eve, to carry home twenty-two pounds of potatoes which I had miraculously secured. The tram, as usual, was chock full and in the scuffle to get through it and out at the front my glasses were knocked off. In my near-sighted efforts to retrieve them, I was rather badly pushed about.

I reached home exhausted and trembling but did not know I had injured myself. That night we went over to a New Year's Eve party at Jane's. By midnight I was feeling ill, so we spent the night in Jane's large

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room with her and Michael, another old friend, who had come to Moscow from England early in 1931, and who was also a member of the British Communist Party.

Next morning, alone with Michael after Jane and Arcadi had gone to work, I had the miscarriage. Michael could not get Arcadi by phone, for there was only one line at his office and it was out of order. So he fetched Jane home and went off in a *droshki* for Arcadi.

Arcadi tried for two hours to get a doctor and finally came with one he had secured "commercially." The doctor to whose services my trade-union membership entitled me arrived about six hours later and was obviously not a doctor at all, but a bedraggled, dirty, haggard young woman whom I would not have allowed to touch me. Her only use to me was to sign the necessary certificate for my office that I was ill.

By evening the pain had lessened and the real doctor said if it did not get worse again I need only lie still. If the pain returned, I must go to the nearest "abortion house" and be scraped.

Next day at noon I was in agony. Michael, having telephoned to Arcadi, sat beside me trying to soothe me until Arcadi managed at last to secure a taxi to move me to the hos-

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pital. There he had to leave me. I was strapped down upon an operating table and scraped by a "surgeon" who did not even wash her hands before operating, and whose whole painted appearance suggested a prostitute rather than a doctor.

I was given no chloroform and the pain was excruciating. Then I was taken upstairs to a small room about twelve by twelve feet, with five beds in it. I was given an ice pack and then they left me. No one came near me, no one washed me. There was no nurse or attendant of any kind. The other patients begged me for the piece of soap I had brought with me. I was the only one of the five patients who had soap and none was provided by the hospital.

At about eleven o'clock the following morning, after a breakfast of thin gruel, I was ordered to get up and come downstairs. I protested that I was bleeding and should not walk. No one paid any attention. Downstairs I was again put on the operating table, held down by four attendants, and scraped again.

I yelled, "Why twice?"

But no one paid any attention. After this I broke down and found myself weeping. I had been suffering for forty-eight hours, the pain was agonizing, the place was filthy,

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and I felt I was in a nightmare. When I asked for something to wipe away the blood, the "nurse" picked a dirty piece of cotton off the floor and handed it to me.

I determined to get out of this terrible "hospital" before I caught some awful disease. I sent a note to Arcadi telling him he must get me out somehow. At first they wouldn't allow me to go, but after he had told them I was an English journalist, they got frightened.

A nice, clean young woman doctor speaking French came to see me. She finally explained to me that the first "doctor" had forgotten to write down on my case sheet that I had already been operated upon; hence the second ordeal.

Jane offered to nurse me and I was permitted to leave. I remember very vividly the joy of being back with her and Michael in their clean room after that terrible hospital. For a week I lay there in bed, Arcadi coming in the evenings for the dinner which Jane cooked for us all. Poor Arcadi never got away from the office for dinner till eight or nine at night and then still had to get home by streetcar. He looked far more ill and exhausted than I did, and my experience had upset him badly.

It was as well I did not have the baby,

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although I was very disappointed at the time. We did not secure a permanent room of our own until nearly two years later. What we should have done with a baby on our continued moving from room to room I do not know.

The companionship of Jane and Michael that winter lightened our hearts. Michael and I had worked at home in the same local of the British Communist Party. We had sold the *Daily Worker* together and he had been my bodyguard when I spoke from a soap box in the streets of London. So long as he and Jane Tabrisky remained in Russia I had trusted friends to whom I could open my heart and speak freely, for their reactions to Stalin's Russia were the same as my own.

Not that we agreed about everything. Liberals never do. And we were all liberals in the original sense of the word; none of us was seeking a career in Russia at the expense of our integrity or our friends. Arcadi did not easily make friends or give his confidence to anyone, but Michael and he liked each other immensely.

Michael, like Arcadi, had had an unhappy childhood, and like him had learned at an early age to hide his feelings from a hostile world, and to take refuge in humor from the

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hurts which his sensitiveness would otherwise have found intolerable. When I would boil with rage and indignation at the divergence between Soviet professions and Soviet practice, Michael and Arcadi would make a joke of it. Whereas I hated Stalin as the brutal and callous oppressor, Michael and Arcadi saw him not as a bloodthirsty tyrant, but as an historic phenomenon.

They argued that if there had been no Stalin, there would have been someone else like him. I then had leanings toward Trotskyism and was still convinced that if Trotsky instead of Stalin had led the Bolshevik party there would have been no famine, and no perversion of the revolutionary movement.

They assured me that Trotskyism was sheer romanticism, and that the course which history was taking in the Soviet Union followed logically from the foundations Lenin laid. Since this was so, it had to be accepted as socialism; and one could only hope, and work, to make it a little more tolerable. Life might be a tragedy to those who felt deeply but the way to keep sane was by seeing it as a comedy.

Michael had gone into the British army in the First World War at the age of sixteen and nearly died afterwards of tuberculosis.

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He had something of my brother's cheerful skepticism and good humor, and like Arcadi had no great hopes that the world was at all likely to be run rationally and intelligently or justly.

To Michael, Marxism was a tool, not a dogma, an aid to the understanding of history, past and present, not a revelation. What was happening in Russia must be accepted as the consequence of the socialization of the means of production and distribution by a minority in a backward country. Here was no society of the free and equal, nor was it likely to become so. It was no use to get indignant because the new society was so very different from what men had hoped for.

Michael's view of the Soviet Union was very much like that expressed years later by Max Eastman in *Stalin's Socialism*. Since this was the society which had come out of the socialization of land and capital it *was* socialism. The fact that it bore no resemblance to the society which Socialists had envisioned and that there was even greater social and material inequality than under capitalism did not prove that it was not socialism.

Michael and Arcadi were extraordinarily impersonal in their judgments. They saw

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men as moved by forces they could not understand, and the ills of the Soviet world as due more to the stupidity of its rulers than to their malignancy or wickedness.

They taught me not to regard Stalin as a personal devil but rather to see him as the result of Russia's past history and of the Bolshevik Revolution, not as a cause but as an effect of historical circumstances. I could not, however, at first accept their view that under Lenin or Trotsky it would have been essentially the same.

Jane, whose knowledge of the writings of Marx and Lenin was exceptional, reminded us that Lenin himself had prophesied in 1905, that "anyone who attempts to achieve socialism by any other route than that of political democracy will inevitably arrive at the most absurd reactionary deductions, both political and economic."

Michael, Jane and I would discuss by the hour the theory and practice of Bolshevism and the whys and wherefores of Russia's present miserable situation. Michael always took the Marxist point of view that history, in broad outline, would have followed the same course had Lenin lived. Jane said that if Lenin had lived he would have shared Trotsky's fate.

I argued that then, at least, it would have



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been obvious to the whole world that there had been a counter-revolution. That a Stalin who ousted Lenin would never have been able to win influence over the radical movements of the West. The Revolution would have been buried instead of its corpse poisoning the air of a whole generation of progressives in Europe and America. As it was, Stalin had been able to camouflage his counter-revolution, and to confuse socialists and liberals all over the world by his zigzags from right to left and back again, so that the very terms had lost all meaning.

Arcadi, on the rare occasions when he had the leisure to join in our discussions, would remind us that it was Lenin himself who had laid the foundation for the Russia we were living in. He had himself met Lenin and heard him speak in Switzerland in the years before the First World War when Arcadi had been a student at Zurich University.

My husband had been repelled by Lenin's views at the time since they denied the democratic basis for socialism. Yet now, Arcadi was arguing that, after all, Lenin might have been right, and perhaps the present period of terror and want in Russia would lead to an era of plenty and freedom.

He refused, as yet, to recognize that in

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considering the ultimate aim all important, and the means unimportant, Lenin had established the foundations for the permanent despotism of an aristocracy of Communists over the mass of the people.

Jane would then quote Plekhanov, the father of Russian Socialism who as early as 1907 had prophesied what Lenin's policies would lead to, saying: "At the bitter end, everything will revolve around one man, who will *ex providentia* unite all powers in himself."

Marx, although rather vague concerning the "dictatorship of the proletariat," had had no doubt that it was to be absolutely democratic, for in his view socialism was to come after capitalism had reduced all but a small minority to the condition of "proletarians." For him, seizure of power by the proletariat meant the overthrow of a small group of capitalist exploiters by the overwhelming majority of the people.

Socialist society was to be the only truly democratic society since socialism alone could deprive an exploiting class of its economic and political power. Engels, commenting upon Marx's vindication of the Paris Commune of 1871, had proclaimed that absolute democracy was the natural form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As we have

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seen, Lenin himself in 1905, had declared that without democracy there could be no socialism.

Nevertheless Lenin, in his insistence from 1907 onwards that the Social Democratic Party should be composed of professional revolutionaries, was denying the democratic basis of Marxian socialism. This was realized by the minority of the Russian Social Democratic party (the Mensheviks) and originally by Trotsky, who did not join the Bolsheviks (the majority party) until 1917.

In effect, Lenin saw what the Social Democrats failed to see, that the working class did *not* naturally desire socialism, and that if one waited for it to become revolutionary by itself, one might wait until the end of time.

Marx had believed that the course of capitalist development would of itself turn the working class into revolutionaries. Lenin saw before 1914 that it wouldn't, and after 1914 that the workers were patriots first and a class-conscious proletariat second. He did not on that account reject Marxism. His solution was a revolution, led by professional revolutionaries who knew better than the workers what the latter needed for their own good: socialism. All along, Lenin distrusted "the masses" and saw "the Party"

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as necessary to prevent their falling away from the revolutionary path.

This transmutation of Marxism was the easier for Lenin because he was a Russian. The belief in democracy was inherent and deep-rooted in the minds of the Marxists of Western Europe; and it was the rational side of Marx, not his mystical belief in the inevitability of progress, which appealed to them.

But Lenin was a Russian, and his ideas were unconsciously affected by the fanaticism and naïveté of his country and his people. For him the bedrock belief that history was "inevitably" leading mankind to a better social system, was fundamental. Marxism was a creed and a body of dogma which Lenin could interpret according to the practical needs of the moment. This made him far more resolute and immediately successful than the hesitant, tolerant, and essentially humanitarian leaders of the western Social Democratic parties; but it also made possible the later grotesque distortions of the aims of the Revolution by Stalin and his henchmen.

Lenin wrote that the Bolsheviks should not "shrink from barbarous methods to fight barbarism," nor be afraid to hasten Russia's assimilation of Western civiliza-

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tion by dictatorial methods. He failed to perceive until too late that these precepts would lead to his party becoming the instrument of a savage and barbarous Asiatic despotism.

Before his death Lenin made unfailing efforts to stem the tide which was sweeping the Russian people toward a tyranny worse than that of the Tsars. But he could not command the waves to retire.

When I saw Lenin's embalmed body in the Red Square it seemed to me that his lips were set in a sardonic and bitter smile. In his last hours he had no God to whom to cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" But his expression suggested the realization that his life's work had borne a bitter and unwholesome fruit. His goal had been human freedom. But by sanctioning the ruthless use of power by an elite minority, and by inflaming the hatreds of mankind, he had laid the foundations for a worse tyranny than the world had yet known.

Friendship is very precious in an uncertain, savage and strange world, where everyone's hand is against his neighbor, and fear and the struggle for bare subsistence drive even decent men and women to spy upon and to denounce one another. Life is endurable only if you have at least one hu-

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man being to whom you can speak your mind freely and without fear. I had to come home, close the door, and shut out the world in which life was one continual pretense, a perpetual licking of the hand which smites you.

A little freedom of expression, honesty of thought and speech, are as necessary as air. Without them one would suffocate in the foul Moscow atmosphere. The glaring contradictions between theory and practice, between what was supposed to be and what was, and the constant effort to say and look the opposite of what one thought, were by no means the least strain in Soviet life. I began to understand why so many Russians sought escape in drink, why the vodka shops were never empty, and why men lay drunk in the snow by the roadside.

Such conditions draw you ever closer to the few people you love and trust. Like primitive man sheltering with his mate in a cave against the violence of the elements and the fear of wild beasts, so in Soviet Russia you sheltered with your family in your room or corner from the storm of terror, hate, regimented sadism, hunger, cold, and wretchedness, and the nauseating cant and hypocrisy of Soviet life.

Arcadi is lost to me, but to this day Jane in England and Michael now in the United

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States remain friends with whom the ties forged in that period of disillusionment and horror are stronger than the ties of friendship with anyone else in my life.

We three talked ceaselessly evening after evening, and this saved me from what would otherwise have been intolerable loneliness and long hours of brooding. For Arcadi was working literally twelve or thirteen hours a day. He came back late at night so tired out after a day at the office, practically without food, that my one care and interest was to feed him and get him to bed. Breakfast was the only meal at which we had much chance to talk. He often had to work even on his free day.

## IX

### *Arcadi's Awakening*

WHEN I RETURNED to Moscow in September 1931, after three months in England arranging for the publication of my book, *Lancashire and the Far East*, I found my husband thin and pale and so nervous and worn out I was frightened. It was almost as if he wished to kill himself with work. Yet conditions for the non-Party men were such that most of his time and energy were wasted. Whatever he did to improve efficiency would be undone by someone else. Moreover, like the other specialists, Arcadi was in constant danger of being arrested as the scapegoat for the mistakes of his Communist Party supervisors.

Toward the end of the year we received a visit from C. M. Lloyd, head of the Social Science Department of the London School



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of Economics, who had directed my research there. He was also Foreign Editor of the *New Statesman*. Lloyd was a friend, intelligent and discreet, and I talked to him freely.

Arcadi challenged my statements and denied the truth of what I said, or modified it. He convinced, or almost convinced, Lloyd that a socialist society *was* being created in the Soviet Union. Arcadi argued that the special privileges of the Communist Party members and the suffering of the people would pass, were not important, or were inevitable.

Since he cared very little whether or not he shared those privileges, he dismissed them as unimportant. I was convinced they were the basis of all the corruption and distortion of the socialist idea. Lloyd went home and wrote a series of articles in the *New Statesman* which, although cautious in their optimism, showed his confidence in the Soviet system.

After Lloyd had gone we continued the argument. Arcadi and I had our first, and I think our last, real quarrel. For weeks we were estranged. Arcadi, in opposing me, as he later acknowledged, was really fighting his own doubts about the Soviet Union. He almost hated me for a while. I was miserable, but I could not recant.

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I still saw the English papers and the trickle of information there about the ghastly conditions in the timber prison camps, and the famine in the Ukraine was confirmed not only by rumors in Moscow, but by the sight of the starving peasants.

The food situation in Moscow during my second winter was far worse than the winter before. By this time Arcadi had *Gort B* rations and I had *Insnab*, the store for foreign specialists and Communists working in Moscow. This meant that we were infinitely better off than most people. Many of our acquaintances were half starving and were grateful for the gift of a pound of cereal from my rations.

I had left my job in the Comintern to work as a textile specialist in Promexport, the organization exporting manufactured goods. My visits to the textile districts in the course of my duties showed me the pitiful condition of the working class which was supposed to be the ruler of the country.

At Ivanova Vosnysensk I had seen wretched men and women striving to "fulfill the plan" on a diet of black bread and mush. In the textile factory *stolovayas* the dinner consisted of millet with a little sunflower-seed oil. There was no herring to be had in the shops.

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A meat dish of sorts could be bought for two and a half rubles in a restaurant, but as the average monthly wage of the mill workers was only 70 or 80 rubles, few could afford it. The contrast between my living standard and that of ordinary Russian workers was greater than between ours and the Communist hierarchy. Workers still lived in barracks or in hovels and as one elderly woman said to me, "at least under the Tsar we had enough bread to eat."

I was receiving over four pounds of butter, thirteen pounds of meat, and thirty eggs a month, besides cheese, flour, millet, buckwheat, semolina, and even one pound of rice—most precious cereal in Russia. I could also buy milk if I arrived at the *Insnab* store at the right time, and quite often I could obtain *smetana* and *prostakwasha* (sour cream and sour milk).

Sometimes vegetables, fruit and chocolate were also on sale. Arcadi's ration was a good deal smaller than mine but compared to that of the workers, and that of the ordinary run of employees, we were rich. We could also buy cigarettes and soap, which had become almost as great a luxury as butter.

Arcadi finally broke down when he went on a *Komanderofka* to Odessa in April 1932. He came back white and miserable and

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shaken. In the South he had seen the starving and the dead in the streets. At each railway station en route there had been hundreds and hundreds of starving wretches, emaciated women with dying babies at their milkless breasts, children with the swollen stomachs of famine, all begging, begging for bread.

In station waiting rooms he had seen hundreds of peasant families herded together awaiting transportation to imprisonment in the concentration camps. He had seen children dying of starvation and typhus, scarecrows of men and women pushed and kicked by the OGPU guards. It sickened even those of us who were hardened to the sight of suffering in the Far East.

Arcadi had relatives in Odessa. From them he learned the facts of the Ukrainian famine. The picture he painted for me, a picture which had seared him to the soul and shattered the optimistic view which he had until then insisted upon preserving, bore out all the rumors we had heard—was in fact worse.

What perhaps shocked Arcadi most of all was to find that the train guards, conductors, and attendants were apparently all black market speculators. They were buying food in Moscow, always better provided for

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than other cities, and selling it at fantastic prices down in the stricken southern land.

Starving children are the most pitiful sight on earth. There were enough of them in Moscow to make one's heart ache, but in the Ukraine they were legion.

Bodies of the starving lay in the streets, and pitiful wrecks of humanity with great watery blisters and boils on their feet, legs, and arms, dragged themselves from place to place till they died in the vain quest for work and food.

That summer we went on a holiday to the Crimea, taking with us my mother, who had just come from England. We left Moscow well provided with food for the long journey. But by the end of the first day my mother had given it all away to the starving wretches at the country railway stations.

With tears streaming down her face she called my attention to one wretched beggar after another, especially to the pitiful children. That journey was an ordeal I shall never forget. It was a sea of misery which the few bits of food we had could do nothing to assuage.

*"Totia dai Kleb, Totia dai Kleb"* (Auntie, give bread), will always ring in my ears as the national song of "Socialist Russia."

As in China, so in Russia you had to

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harden yourself to the sight of suffering in order to live. But at least in China the government does not hold it a crime to give aid to the starving. In Russia the officials told you that the starving were Kulaks or counter-revolutionaries not to be helped, although in reality they were bewildered, ignorant, powerless wretches sacrificed to the insensate ambitions and fanaticism of a man and a party.

It was the contrasts which were always so appalling. The fat officials in the dining car, the well-fed callous OGPU guards, and the starving people. We and they, we and they, rulers and ruled, oppressors and oppressed.

In the rest home in the Crimea, where we had got places, there was abundant food. So abundant that bread and fruit, ices and cake were thrown away when left on the plates of the guests, for whom too much had been provided. This rest home belonged to the Central Committee of the Soviets of the Crimean Republic, and we were there by the grace of Berkinghof, whom we had known in London. He was a prominent Bolshevik who belonged to this part of Russia.

It was so very "upper class Communist" that we really had no business there, but it gave us an insight into the life of the Party

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aristocracy. The sight and sound of the starving was shut out from these former palaces and country houses of the Russian nobility, now as in the past. Now there was a new aristocracy. That seemed to be the only difference.

This new Soviet aristocracy and its hangers-on were even more grasping, cruel, and ruthless than the old Tsarist aristocracy which had lived in conditions of less general want and misery. The Soviet bureaucracy and their employees were like the people in a shipwreck who have managed to get into the few lifeboats not smashed to pieces. If they helped the drowning wretches in the sea of misery into the boats, all would drown. So the lucky ones beat back the masses of the unfortunate with their oars.

Those who did not starve in the Soviet Union thus aided the government in repressing the masses who did, and denounced as counter-revolutionaries the famished who had once followed the Bolsheviks under the delusion that they would create a just social order and a prosperous economy.

There was, of course, a convenient theory to justify the terrible social and material gulf between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers were held to be "indispensable" as the "builders of socialism." They were so

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important that they must always be well fed and enjoy comfortable holidays in luxurious sanatoria and rest homes, else they would be unable to bear the great burden of their responsibilities.

The wretches dying of starvation and the ill-fed workers and peasants were just cannon fodder in the battle of socialism. If there were not enough food to go around, the officers of the socialist army must be well fed even if everyone else went short. In the future everyone would have plenty if the rulers were ruthless enough now to see millions die in the cause of industrialization.

This theory did not explain why the survival and comfort of the wives and children and mistresses of the Communist Party bureaucracy were also essential to the Revolution. I suppose it could be argued that the peace of mind of the rulers must also be preserved.

Thus have aristocracies in all historical periods justified their privileges. The Soviet aristocracy is no exception.

Life in the Soviet Union might be uncomfortable and saddening, tragic and repulsive, but it taught us politically as no other experience could have done. Michael, Jane, and I felt this even when the process of being educated was most painful. We learned



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to recognize reality under false labels and were cured of political illusions, or at least of the propensity to fall for slogans, facile panaceas, and hypocritical pretenses.

Ever since I lived in Russia it has been almost impossible for me to accept professions and declared aims at their face value anywhere. Perhaps I have gone too far to the other extreme, being now inclined to think that those who profess least virtue are likely to have most. In any case I am, I believe, forever cured of the Western intellectual's preoccupation with external forms and labels.

I cannot accept tyranny, cruelty and starvation as justified because they are being inflicted on people in the name of a humanitarian ideal. Nor can I understand how Western intellectuals who call themselves liberals or socialists can seek to bring on their own countries the Russian pattern of blood-stained dictatorship, misguidedly called a "classless society."

Life in the Soviet Union also made me realize that some absolute standards of behavior are essential to mankind if we are not to return to the level of the brute. Voltaire's saying that if God did not exist, He would have to be invented, needs restating in new terms. Russia taught me that even

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if one does not believe in God one must have a moral code, must accept certain social values as absolutes, and allow some freedom to the individual conscience.

How can a just and humane social order be created if we root out our own humanity in the process of destroying the old society? After long years of bitter experience I have come to accept Bertrand Russell's social philosophy.

I have learned that absolute power will corrupt any minority, that more evil is caused by fanatics than by wicked men, that no movement or individual can be certain enough of the effect their actions will have, to subordinate means entirely to ends. Six years in Soviet Russia have convinced me that democracy for all its inefficiency is likely to secure more justice than any despot, however benevolent he may be or may profess himself to be.

Why is it that only personal experience of Communist tyranny and terror, with the never-absent physical fear of the secret police, can shatter the illusions of those of us who call ourselves Western liberals, men like Henry Wallace who glibly speak of "our overemphasis on Bill of Rights democracy" and the superiority of Russia's so-called economic democracy?

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Why is it that we who have enjoyed the human freedoms which our forefathers fought so hard to win and to bequeath to us, do not, with the example of Russia before us, realize the horrors of life without freedom? Why is it that we cannot understand that there is no such thing as embracing Communism as an experiment? It is a one-way street, ending in a *cul de sac* of secret police terror, firing squads for the intellectuals and leaders and concentration camps and slave labor for the masses. There is no turning back; there is no escape.

The coalescing of political and economic power which is taking place everywhere and has reached its consummation in totalitarian states, confronts mankind with new problems in urgent need of solution. A new set of principles and a new morality are needed to secure order, social unity, liberty, and the rational use of the vast productive forces science and technology have created.

Yet instead of seeking for a way to combine order and control with individual liberty, most of our "progressive" intellectuals of recent years have taken refuge under the mantle of Stalin's cruel despotism. Their critical faculties have become atrophied together with their liberalism; and, while barricading the front door against Brown

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National Socialism, they opened wide the back door to the Red variety of the same thing.

Whether or not we can ever deepen and widen our democracy to control economic as well as political power, and thus cope with the problem of an over-ripe capitalism without destroying the liberties to which capitalism gave birth, is perhaps doubtful. But there would be a little more hope of our doing so if our one-time liberals had not been lured along the totalitarian path by the blood-red light of Stalin's "socialism."

I also learned in the Soviet Union how slight are the differences between men, between the "good" and the "bad." I remember one evening how Michael said to Jane and me:

"Can't you realize now that you and I, all of us, everyone we know, is capable here of deeds at which we now shudder?"

What seems to differentiate men most is their greater or lesser degree of courage—in particular the moral courage to face the fact that they have been mistaken in their beliefs. This was particularly obvious in Russia where the decent, humane and altruistic types of Communist too often recoiled before the realization that they had wasted their lives, sacrificed their personal

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happiness, and endured prison and exile to accomplish the opposite of what they had planned.

Rather than acknowledge so terrible a truth they buried their heads in the sand and drowned their doubts in work or even in excessive cruelty to others. My brother had spoken more wisely than he knew when years before he had warned me that self-deception is the root of evil. But he who had never left the free Western world could never have imagined the compulsions which drive men under Communist dictatorship to drown their doubts and bow their heads before a hypocritical tyranny.

Even men of high courage and integrity can be broken by an inhuman system. Men who can face hunger and prison and even torture for themselves cannot endure the starvation of their children. That breaks the hardest spirit and enslaves the boldest.

The American workman who goes on strike may be willing to see his children hungry if there is some hope of victory. But few men can face the prospect of their wives and children being tossed out into the snow to die of starvation and cold, when they know there is no hope of winning out against the state which is employer, policeman, judge and executioner.

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Often in Russia I repeated to Arcadi the words which Euripides put into the mouth of Andromache when, after the fall of Troy, they take her little son away to be killed: "Oh, ye have found an anguish to outstrip all tortures of the East, ye gentle Greeks."

The Soviet state had found a more certain method of breaking human beings than the crude physical tortures inflicted by the Nazis on their victims. The Kremlin learned that the surest way to break resistance to tyranny was by threatening men through their wives and children. How can the Russian worker strike when he knows that not only will he be imprisoned but also that his family will be thrown into the street immediately, and his wife refused employment?

How can the intellectual refuse to write or speak the lies demanded of him, when the NKVD tells him that if he will not his wife will also be imprisoned and his children left to become homeless waifs? Only the peasants, too brutish and too tough, may occasionally defy the Soviet Government by passive resistance.

The Kremlin also knows that, whereas some men can face torture and death and even the reprisals inflicted on those they love, provided their sacrifice will inspire others to revolt, few men can bear to die

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behind closed doors without the opportunity to testify to the world what they are dying for.

When Christian martyrs faced the lions in the arena, or when in the religious wars Protestants or Catholics were burned at the stake, they could go to their death knowing that they had lighted a torch which others would carry on. They could endure tortures because they were convinced the sacrifice would not be in vain.

But would they have suffered unflinchingly to the end if they had been shot without trial in some dark cellar, knowing that they would be accused, not only of crimes they had never committed, but of having aimed at the overthrow of what they were trying to save?

An open counter-revolution in Russia might have left Communists and Socialists believing in their cause and prepared to start the struggle for social justice and liberty over again. But Stalin's counter-revolution had been a long, secret, and disguised process. Men were not expected to repudiate the old aims. They were instead required to mouth the old slogans and testify to their belief in the old faith while the meaning of the slogans, theories, and words had been completely changed.

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The result necessarily was a mental, moral, and political confusion in which men could no longer clearly see the road before them.

Arcadi, now revolted by the cruelty of the Communist Party and its perversion of the Revolution, doubted whether there was any practical alternative to Stalin's "socialism." Although he was convinced that the gravest mistakes had been made, he was doubtful how they could now ever be remedied.

I saw how the Russians, deprived of faith and of hope, sank into apathy and skepticism, or made up their minds to do the best they could for themselves in this new anarchic, cruel world in which pity was a crime and fraud and hypocrisy the qualities essential for survival.

The fight for bare existence absorbed the minds and energies of the masses, while the struggle for position and affluence seemed the main preoccupation of most of those fortunate enough to belong to the Communist Party.

The best way, in fact the only way, to preserve your integrity and your life if you were an intellectual in Soviet Russia was to give up all expectation or desire for advancement and honor, and never to talk about anything but trivialities even to your closest



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friends. There were men of education who took jobs selling newspapers and books or cigarettes at street kiosks, happy to have found a niche where they were likely to be let alone, where no one would envy them or suspect them. Only by burying themselves could they call their souls their own.

Specialists known to have exceptional qualifications could not thus hide themselves. The state insisted upon their working in factories, mines, and offices, on the railways and communications. Here they were always in danger of being made into scapegoats. But if they could secure a Party patron likely to be "permanent" (the Soviet expression for a Party bureaucrat so well connected as to be unlikely to fall from favor), and toil loyally and unselfishly for him, letting him take the credit for their cleverness and hard work, they might hope to survive. It was rather like the old Roman system of senators and clients.

The word "protection" was openly used in the USSR. "So-and-so," it would be said, "has a powerful protection; he's likely to be all right." If a non-Party man could marry his daughter to a high Party official he felt very secure, but this was difficult unless she were particularly attractive, for Party men naturally wished to ally themselves to those

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who could be of use to them, not to non-Party specialists.

Of course, in the holocaust of Party members in the late thirties, the protection of the highest often came to mean disaster to his protégés. When a powerful man was purged, a whole row of small skittles was knocked down with him. It was a storm in which the highest trees as well as the lowest were struck by the lightning, and no one felt safe.

Sometimes I am asked about the Soviet educational system; questioned as to whether a great deal has not at least been done for the children. And I remember the homeless kids who slept in the loft above our flat in *Ordinka* and begged for crusts and hot water. I remember the pale children of the textile workers at Ivanovo Vosnysensk, living crowded together in the tenements without beds to sleep upon.

I remember the charwoman at Promexport who lived in a hallway with her two young children and considered that a soup made of bones was a great luxury. I remember the babies at the *Consultazia* for mothers, where I took my son each week to be weighed. The mothers could get free medical advice, but they could not afford milk, and had to feed their babies on black bread

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soaked in water. They took a photograph there one day of my son to exhibit because he was almost the only baby who did not have rickets.

And I remember the children in the queues at the prison where I went with food after my husband's arrest. One morning there was a boy who could not have been more than nine or ten years old, bringing a sack of food for his mother. When I showed my ignorance of the procedure he asked me with astonishment: "Is this the first time you have been here?"

There are brave children in Russia inured to "eating bitterness," as the Chinese say; children sometimes left alone in an empty room when their parents are both arrested, and who sell all the pitiful small possessions of the family to take food to their parents. If there is no relative to shelter them and neither parent comes home, they join the hordes of homeless children and learn to beg, to thief and to live like little wild animals in the savage Soviet world. That is one kind of Communist education.

Of all the cruel acts of Stalin the most horrible was the provision for the liquidation of the older homeless children. In 1935, when by decree the death penalty for theft was made applicable to children from the

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age of twelve, the police were given the power to rid Soviet society of the unwanted children of the unfortunate.

If your mother and father are docile, careful never to breathe a word of criticism of the government, work hard, and are lucky, you may get a different sort of education. You may learn how wonderful Communism is, how many tons of iron and steel the Soviets can produce, and how many more they hope to produce; and how much more terrible is the life of the working class in the capitalist United States of America than in Russia.

You will be taught to sing patriotic songs and do military exercises and to worship the great Stalin. You may even get the chance later to study to be an engineer or a pilot, or be trained for some other profession if your social origins are all right and if you have carefully conformed throughout your school life.

If you are the son or daughter of a prominent Communist Party member in Russia, the way will be made smooth for you and you will enjoy the same privileges as the children of the rich in any capitalist country. You will go to a select school with airy classrooms and the best teachers. At home you will have a room of your own to study

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in and plenty of books instead of trying, like the children of the workers, to do your homework in a small room in which your father and mother, brothers and sisters live and sleep.

You will sleep in a good bed, not on the floor or in the same bed as your brother and sister. You will eat the best food and have long holidays in the country instead of feeding on black bread, cabbage soup, and cucumbers and spending the hot summer in the city. You will have servants to wait upon you instead of having to stand in line yourself at the shops when you come home from school.

Equality of opportunity in the Soviet Union is a myth. There are different schools for the masses and for the Communist aristocracy. There can be no equality in educational opportunity where some children are undernourished and housed little better than pigs, while others live in comparative luxury.

## X

### *Life in Moscow*

MY SEARCH for some useful work to perform in Soviet society had caused me to change my job almost as frequently as we had changed rooms. My first work, that of a *referent* in the Anglo-American section of the Communist International, had been utterly futile. True that part of my job was to read and mark the English language newspapers, and this at least kept me in touch with foreign affairs.

But for the rest, I spent my time participating in useless post-mortems on the activities of the British and American Communist Parties, and in assisting in writing memoranda and directives which were supposed to tell the English-speaking comrades what they ought to do. The directives were drawn up mainly with an eye to

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self-insurance, so that whatever happened the blame would not be placed on us. They consisted mostly of a lot of Party platitudes and abstract principles.

Consequently, our directives were worse than useless as guidance to the British Communist Party and were probably never read. Instructions as to the Party line at any given moment came from higher sources in the Kremlin, and they were all the foreign parties needed to pay keen attention to.

Fed up with the futility of my work at the Comintern and fearing also that if I continued in so-called political activity, I should soon be spotted as an unreliable heretic, I took advantage of an offer to work as a specialist on textiles. After six months work at Promexport I accepted the offer of a job at the newly created Commissariat of Light Industry.

In these two posts I learned enough about how the Soviet economy functioned to understand why all the heavy labor and bitter privations of the Russian people failed to give them a tolerable existence.

For months, our struggles to acquire a flat, or at least a room of our own, continued. For some weeks in the spring of 1932, we lived at the New Moscow Hotel, our room paid for by *Lecterserio*, the export organiza-

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tion of which Arcadi had been made vice-chairman. This room cost 25 rubles a day, which we could not, of course, have paid ourselves. The manner in which it was secured for us revealed to me something of the corruption now rife in Soviet life.

Being without a room of any kind, Arcadi was living three in a room with Jane and Michael in Jane's room at the Marx Engels Institute, while the Anikeevs were kindly putting me up. Anikeeva whom I had met in Japan was a dear, and never became a Soviet snob. In spite of her husband's high position, they both remained our friends.

Not to have a home was bad enough, but we couldn't continue to impose indefinitely upon our friends. So Arcadi and I more or less camped in the office of the man at *Narcomvneshtorg* who was supposed to secure rooms for employees of this Commissariat. We spent a whole day there, from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M., refusing to budge until something was done for us.

By now we understood a little of the Soviet way of life and only this kind of sit-down protest seemed likely to assure Arcadi his rights. For *Narcomvneshtorg* had promised him a room many weeks before if he would take the vice-chairmanship of *Lecter serio*,



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and in so doing give up the room he was to receive from Promexport.

The Communist Party member in charge of rooms at the Commissariat of Foreign Trade had over and over again promised Arcadi this room or that, only to give it to someone else. Arcadi had been absorbed in his work and was always passed over. Now we were determined to force the Commissariat to honor its contract.

Finally, in the late afternoon, Comrade X got on the phone to the manager of the New Moscow Hotel. A long conversation followed. The manager of the hotel wanted a *quid pro quo*. He had been trying to get a *Gort A* ration book for one of his assistants not really entitled to it. If Comrade X would secure this for him, he would let us have a room at the hotel. But Comrade X only had a limited number of *Gort A* books to give away, and he wanted them for his own cronies. Getting a room for a non-Party man was a small return for the *Gort A* book, since a non-Party man had no patronage with which to pay for a room to live in.

Arcadi went off to Phillip Rabinovitch, ex-chairman of Arcos in London, now high up the Soviet ladder of success, and almost a Vice-Commissar. Rabinovitch phoned

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Comrade X and told him to come up and talk to him. Finally we were saved. Reluctantly, Comrade X agreed to give the precious *Gort A* book to the Intoursist manager's assistant in return for a room for our humble selves. Triumphantly, we presented ourselves at the New Moscow Hotel.

Food was now our greatest problem. I had *Insnab* and Arcadi had *Gort B* rations, but how could we cook? In the New Moscow Hotel dining room a dinner cost about 20 to 25 rubles, and so was out of the question. However, Arcadi had brought a little electric saucepan and an electric kettle from Berlin in 1928, and with these I managed to make meals of a sort.

Disposal of the rubbish was the greatest problem, since cooking in our room was forbidden. We solved it by carrying out potato peelings and other refuse in neat brown paper parcels which we disposed of in the street dustbins on the way to work.

We were better off than many other people in our hotel. A few doors away lived Soermus, the well-known Finnish violinist who had played in the streets in England to collect money for the striking miners in 1926. His wife, an Irishwoman, had nothing to cook on except an electric iron. Ingen-

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iously, she turned it upside down, put a saucepan on it full of vegetables and meat, and left it to simmer all day.

Once or twice a month we treated ourselves to a real dinner in the hotel dining room, and very occasionally a friend or acquaintance from England who was on a trip to Russia would give us some of his Intourist meal tickets entitling us to a free breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

The manager of the restaurant, a Caucasian, spoke perfect English and said he had been the headwaiter at the Ritz in London. I discovered this through a casual reference to horse racing as the "opium of the people" in England. He remembered the name of every Derby winner for goodness knows who many years, and was so delighted to find someone who at least knew what horse racing meant, that he treated me to real coffee several times.

Coffee—even now, years afterwards, I remember the delight with which we drank coffee in Moscow! Rarest of luxuries, greatest of joys! Whenever anyone I knew came to visit Russia, I asked them to bring coffee, coffee above all else, and secondly, soap and toilet paper.

Even in this Intourist Hotel toilet paper

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was unknown for a long time. Then one afternoon, returning from work, the floor manageress took me by the arm, marched me triumphantly into the shower room and toilet, and pointing towards a few sheets of thin gray paper, exclaimed, "Look—Kultur!" However, this concrete evidence of Soviet Kultur was a fleeting phenomenon. The gesture made, the supply soon gave out and was not replenished.

Living in the New Moscow Hotel I also got an inkling of the luxurious lives of the secret police officers who occupied many of the rooms. Enormous meals were sent up to the next room to ours, and the sounds of drinking and song and laughter came through the wall late at night, when our OGPU neighbor entertained his friends. The diners in the restaurant were either foreigners or OGPU officers, with very occasionally a couple of ordinary citizens blowing a quarter or half a month's salary on a "bust."

I wrote to my mother in February 1932:

"I leave the office usually at about 4:45 or 5 o'clock, and rush up to the *Insnaab* shop to buy bread, and milk if there is any—which is very seldom now. I get home about seven o'clock and have some kind of a meal. Then I try to do some work—translation or

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editing. Or Jane and Michael come around and we talk or play cut-throat bridge.

"Then Arcadi comes home much later and I make tea for him and something to eat. You can have no conception how complicated life is and how much time one wastes over simple things like buying bread. . . .

"I am sorry if I sound depressed, dear. I am not unhappy only I have never before in my life had work to do which was rather dull, and did not have to exercise my faculties to the full and felt that I was making no progress of any kind. . . . I suppose that most of all I miss the very full political life I had in England: speaking, writing, and so forth. I feel I am rustivating and losing all my mental faculties."

Our semi-luxurious existence in the New Moscow Hotel came to an end late in April. May Day was approaching, and we were told that all Russians (except, of course, the OGPU) must clear out to make way for the *valuta*-paying foreigners.

Again we were homeless. This time we both went over to Jane's room. For a few days all four of us lived together. Eventually we secured, temporarily, the use of two rooms on Ostejenka Street in the flat of Gavrilov, an old Party member, whom we had known in England and who was again

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working abroad. For the first time since we came to Moscow we had *two* rooms in a modern flat.

I at once brought my mother from England. I could not send her any money, owing to the impossibility of exchanging rubles into foreign currency, and her own income was very small indeed. So the only solution was to have her live with us for a time. Her coming was in any case a great pleasure. At sixty-two she was still young, and the novelty of life in Russia pleased her.

She loved the Russians who are, in fact, a kindly people when not driven to be brutal by the government and by economic difficulties. Our Russian friends, for their part, thought Mother a wonderful woman, for her vitality, youthful appearance, and zest for living were unknown among old people in Russia.

I got a servant, a nice clean German girl from the Volga. Her village had been devastated—no other word can convey my meaning—by the liquidation of the Kulaks. In the German Volga Republic the peasants, who had been settled there two hundred years before to set an example to the Russians, had been better farmers and so enjoyed a higher standard of life than most peasants in Russia. Consequently, the

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greater part of them were classified as Kulaks and liquidated.

What had been a region of model farming became almost a desert, for more than half the population was exiled or sent to concentration camps. The young people left the villages, the boys to go to the factories if they could get jobs, or to become vagabonds if they couldn't.

The girls came to the towns to work as servants, and were highly prized, since they were more competent, cleaner, more honest and self-respecting than the Russian peasants. Curiously, they were the most purely Teutonic Germans I had ever seen, Germans like the pictures in Hans Andersen fairy tales, blue-eyed, with long golden plaits and lovely, fair skins. Being Protestants, and regarding the Russians around them as no better than barbarians, they had intermarried little and retained a racial purity which would no doubt have delighted Hitler.

An echo of the tragic fate of Russia's German Protestant population reached the world when the Mennonites flocked to Moscow and sought permission to leave the country. Some of these Germans had tried to obey the government and had formed collective farms, only to have them liquidated as Kulak collectives. Being first-class

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farmers, they had committed the crime of making even a *Kolkhoz* productive and prosperous.

Others had quite simply been expropriated from their individual holdings. All were in despair. Few were allowed to leave Russia. They were sent to Siberia to die, or herded into slave labor concentration camps. The crime of being good farmers was unforgivable, and they must suffer for this sin.

My Hilda seemed a treasure. She could cook, she could read and write, she kept herself and the rooms clean and looked like a pink and flaxen doll. I could treat her as an equal without finding that this led to her stealing my clothes and doing no work.

The servant problem in Moscow for Jane and me lay in our inability to bully and curse and drive, which was the only treatment the Russian servant understood. It was quite natural that this should be so, since Soviet society, like Tsarist society but to a far higher degree, was based on force and cheating.

Cheat or be cheated, bully or be bullied, was the law of life. Only the German minority with their strong religious and moral sense—the individual morality of the Protestant as opposed to the mass subservience demanded by the Greek Orthodox



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Church and the Soviet Government—retained their culture and even some courage under Stalin's Terror.

I was amazed at the outspoken way in which Hilda and Sophie (another German girl who worked for Jane) voiced their hatred and contempt of the Soviet Government. Sophie, one of thirteen children of a *bedniak* (poor peasant) would shake her fist and say:

"Kulaks! The Kulaks are up there in the Kremlin, not in the village." Since the word "Kulak" originally signified an exploiter and usurer, her meaning was quite plain.

After a few months of civilized existence on Ostejenka Street, the Gavrilovs returned, and we were once more homeless. I sent my mother back to England with Jane, who was about to leave on a vacation. Michael had left Russia for good a short while before.

Arcadi and I once again got a room at the New Moscow Hotel. This time we also had Hilda living in the room with us, sleeping on the couch. She had to manage the secret cooking on the electric stove.

There was a young American named Clark Foreman living in the New Moscow Hotel who, years before, had been a friend of Jane's when they were both students at the

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London School of Economics. He was in Russia studying social services for the Julius Rosenwald Foundation. Thanks largely to Jane and myself and to a Russian friend of ours, Clark Foreman was one of the very few foreign visitors to learn something of the inside realities of Soviet life.

A cheerful and intelligent young man with progressive views and few prejudices, he did not take the socialist tragedy as seriously as we did, but neither did he fail to see it. His American light-heartedness relieved the atmosphere in which we lived, and through him we were brought into somewhat unwilling contact with other foreigners.

We met Bernal, the Cambridge scientist who was to become an ardent Stalinist, and others like him in whose presence we had the greatest difficulty in keeping our mouths shut. Foreman was very loyal to all of us. However, he later forgot or chose to ignore the lessons he had learned in Russia. In 1943 he became the organizer in New York for the Political Action Committee.

Occasionally we went to those parties of the foreign colony in Moscow which Malcolm Muggeridge has described with biting irony in his book, *Winter in Moscow*. At these parties one found foreigners trying

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to recreate the London and New York radical Bohemian atmosphere of hard drinking and easy loving. But it was no longer youthful and harmless. It had been poisoned and become rather loathsome against the starvation and misery of the Russian background, and by the cant and hypocrisy of the Communists and the fellow travelers.

Moscow's Bohemia was not that of struggling writers, journalists, poets, artists, and students. It consisted of the fortunate, the doctrinaire and hard-boiled foreign Communists, and those foreigners of various kinds working in Moscow because they were failures at home, who enjoyed favors which their own merits could never have secured to them.

They dined and wined on the produce bought at *Insnab*, while most Russians were starving. Michael professed to find it all a huge joke, but he did not relish this society any more than Jane or I did. Arcadi was far too busy for such parties, and anyhow had no liking for drink or salacious stories and songs.

An English newspaperman, editor of the *Moscow Daily News*, who in his youthful revolutionary days had been a member of the International Workers of the World, but who was now a debauched, fat little man,

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would lead in the singing of songs which might sometimes be funny but were usually just nasty. He was known to be a homosexual, and was later expelled from the Soviet Union for corrupting young men.

His immorality was, however, more honest than that of many who, under the guise of being Marxists, had come to the Soviet Union in order to find a society without restraints. In this they were mistaken. Russian society was not for the most part sexually licentious except perhaps in its upper ranks. Most Russians were far too busy struggling to live at all, to have time or energy to imitate the vices of Greenwich Village liberals, and marriage was usually a serious partnership, not a light liaison.

In the midst of my disillusionment about Soviet Russia, I found secret pleasure in the disappointment of youthful American and English Communists when they learned how difficult it is to enjoy light love affairs in Moscow. Many came to Russia to seek an unrestrained Bohemian paradise while posing as revolutionaries. They quickly learned that life is too grim and earnest for erotic pleasures. Romance dissolves when they discover that their mistresses are promptly enrolled by the secret police to spy upon them.

I remember leaving a party in the early

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hours of a spring morning with Jane and Michael, and Temple's friend Rab, who had come from England to visit us. They walked home with me up Kropotkin Street. Outside one of the stores a long queue of weary men and women had already formed waiting for it to open at 9 A.M. These people were standing in line to receive a small ration of food.

We had left a party where caviar, hors d'oeuvres, ham, wine, vodka, chocolates, and fruit had been consumed in abundance, and where as we said goodbye, they had been singing revolutionary songs in drunken voices. They may of course have been drowning their carefully hidden disillusionment in this way.

All this time, in spite of our housing difficulties, our standard of life was far above that of the majority of workers and employees. We did not rank with the Communist aristocracy, but we were upper middle class. I myself, with my *Insnab* ration book, could in fact be counted as an aristocrat insofar as food was concerned.

But, although our living conditions were far better than a year or two before, life for most people, that winter of 1932-33, was more miserable than ever. The scanty meat and butter rations which the industrial workers were supposed to be able to buy

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were usually unobtainable. Most Russians lived on black bread, millet, and buckwheat.

That winter commercial shops began to be in evidence in Moscow—that is, state stores where meat, butter, eggs, vegetables, and clothing could be bought by anyone at prices at least ten times higher than those paid for the rations available to the privileged.

Butter, which cost us three and one-half rubles a kilo could be bought in commercial shops for forty rubles; meat for ten rubles a kilo against the ration price of two rubles; sugar at fifteen rubles a kilo instead of the one ruble we paid. Gradually the commercial prices were lowered to nearer five times the ration prices as a preliminary step to the derationing of food and clothing in 1935.

These commercial shops benefited the middle classes most. They were the specialists and employees who had no closed distributor, but whose salaries of 400 to 600 rubles a month enabled them to buy some food at commercial prices. The shops also helped the small and select group of writers, dramatists, actors, and musicians, some of whom earned very large sums of money and could now buy as much as they needed of all essential foods.

Previously they had bought on the re-

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stricted free market directly from the peasants, at prices higher than those in the new commercial shops. People like ourselves, who earned extra money by translation work or writing, could enjoy more food than allowed on our ration books. Money again came to have some value, and men often took on two jobs to earn enough to buy food at the new shops.

There was a story told that winter of a Russian who returned from several years' work abroad and went around seeing his friends. Each in turn told him of his difficulties. One had a salary of 600 rubles, but since he got only bread and sugar on his food card and had to buy everything else at commercial prices, life was very difficult.

Another with a salary of 500 rubles had the same tale to tell: only bread and sugar on the food card, and everything else to be bought at commercial prices. "We hardly ever taste meat, and butter is our greatest luxury." After questioning many people and always receiving the same answer, he met a girl who used to be his secretary.

"And how are you?" he asked. "You must be finding life very hard."

"Oh, no," she replied, "I'm doing fine. My salary is only 120 rubles, but that provides me with a food card and so with bread and

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sugar; for the rest I undress at commercial prices."

Incidentally, this story illustrates a fact ignored by the tourist, who believed what he was told about the disappearance of prostitution in Soviet Russia. It had only disappeared in the sense that every prostitute needed some kind of a regular job to ensure possession of a food card. The job need not be her main source of income.

There was also a joke in those days about giving to Mikoyan, the Commissar of Internal Trade, the task of liquidating prostitution.

"Why Mikoyan?"

"Well, because everything else he controls disappears!"

Even the commercial shops were not supplied with abundant quantities of essential foods. Long lines formed to secure milk, butter, eggs, and meat, even at the fantastically high prices at which they were sold.

The other new shops which now opened up in one district after another were the *Torgsin* shops. Here one could buy better and more abundant supplies than anywhere else except in the *Kremlovsky* distributors—if one had gold or foreign currency. Prices for food at *Torgsin* were not much higher than world prices, and less than double pre-



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war Russian prices. Everyone who had the tiniest bit of gold—a ring, a bracelet, or jewels—could exchange it for *Torgsin* tokens and secure food.

The only snag was that the OGPU was also on the lookout for possessors of gold, and might at any moment arrest you and force you by torture to disgorge any hidden wealth you had. So people went in fear and trepidation to *Torgsin*, driven by hunger but fearful of the OGPU. *Torgsin* was an outstanding example of the mixed system of terror and reward by which the Russian government seeks to increase its revenues.

The greatest source of income of the *Torgsin* shops was remittances from abroad. Jews, in particular, often had relatives in foreign countries—in Poland, in Germany, and above all in the United States—who would send them a few dollars a month to save them from starvation. The percentage of Jewish people standing in the *Torgsin* queues—there were lines even at these shops since there were never enough sales people—was very high.

Anti-Semitism, although officially condemned, took a new lease on life when the Russians saw their Jewish neighbors in the apartment kitchens cooking good food which

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they never had a chance to buy. A few years later, in the great purge, countless Jewish families suffered for their past enjoyment of a little food bought with money received from abroad.

By 1936 it was held to be a crime to have relatives outside of Russia. The *Torgsin* shops had been closed down, and many Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps for the "crime" of having corresponded with foreign relatives. But from 1932 to 1935, the Soviet state was anxious to secure *valuta*, foreign exchange, at any cost and *Torgsin* served to produce a large revenue.

There was a story told in Moscow of two Jewish women friends who met after many years. One asked the other, a widow, how she was managing to live.

"Oh, I'm all right," she said. "My son provides for me."

"Oh," said the other, "is that your eldest son Boris, whom I remember as a lad?"

"No, not Boris; he's an engineer in Sverdlovsk earning 500 rubles, and since he has a wife and child he can't, of course, spare me a kopek."

"Is it your son Ivan, then?"

"No, Ivan is chief accountant at an export organization, and of course he can't allow

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me anything out of his salary of 400 rubles."

"How, then, do you live?"

"I'm all right because my youngest son, Grisha, is unemployed in America!"

It was in fact the case that even two or three dollars a month could ward off starvation, could enable the recipient to buy a little flour and fat at a cost of one-tenth of the prices paid for the same foods in Russian currency.

Neither *Torgsin* nor the new commercial shops provided relief except for a very small minority of the Russians who had relatives abroad willing to send them dollars, pounds or other foreign currency. The wages of most people were too low to permit them to buy at the commercial shops, and the gulf between the privileged and the oppressed was daily growing wider.

Life that winter of 1932-33 became almost as hard for the majority of the people as in the famine of 1921. As the Kremlin's plans became more and more grandiose, and as the plaudits for the "gigantic successes of Soviet industrialization" swelled into a paean of praise, the conditions of life for workers, peasants, and employees became more and more terrible.

I came to dread reading in the newspapers of great successes on the industrial front or

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of the "approach of socialism" because such announcements almost always heralded some new measure of oppression, some new sacrifice.

A little Italian Communist from Trieste, who worked with Michael at the State Publishing Office, one day graphically expressed what we all felt. Dinner in Russia is eaten in the late afternoon and it was customary for a glass of "tea" to be served at the office a little before noon. One morning the "tea" was not even faintly yellow; it was just plain water. Michael looked at it in disgust, and the Italian grinned.

"When I first came to Russia," he said, "we were served real tea with lemon and sugar in a glass on a saucer with a spoon. A year or so later there was no more lemon. The following year they started to give us *ersatz* tea made of dried carrots. Next there was no more sugar. Then there were no more spoons. Now, apparently they have run short of the *ersatz* tea. But, Michael, cheer up, the water is still hot. We haven't got socialism yet!"

The workers could not easily be induced to accept Stalin's brand of socialism. Like the peasants they migrated from place to place in search of a job with sufficient food and a room to live in.

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The government retaliated with ever increasing measures of compulsion. First it introduced the work certificate, the device subsequently copied by Hitler to ensure the obedience of the working class to the all-powerful State and Party.

This certificate was like a criminal dossier. In it was written the social origins of each worker, any fines he paid, any crimes he had committed, and the reasons for his dismissal from his place of employment. If he could not show good cause for having lost his job he was not to be allowed to work elsewhere. This meant starvation.

Industrial workers were being reduced to the same servitude as the peasants. Whereas the workers were forbidden to leave their jobs, however bad their conditions of work, the various trusts were given the right to transfer them at will from one town or province to another, regardless of their wishes.

This was all the more terrible in Russia, as compared with Germany, where the Nazis instituted a similar mobility of labor, because in the Soviet Union the shortage of housing accommodations was so acute that being evicted from home and sent to another town often meant being unable to find a room to house your family.

The Labor Exchanges were closed down

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and unemployment relief abolished. The unemployed were told to go wherever they were sent and to whatever job the state decreed.

Another cruel decree was issued punishing the worker by dismissal if absent for a single day from the factory. Even if ill he must produce a certificate showing that he had a high temperature. Heavy fines were imposed for being a few minutes late to work.

The cooperatives were placed under the direction of the factory management, so that a worker leaving his job or dismissed immediately lost his own and his family's bread ration.

The successive decrees tightening up labor discipline made us realize we were living in a world in which the working class which was supposed to be the master of the state had lost all liberty and human rights. Anyone who incurred the displeasure of foreman or manager could be thrown out of his job and deprived of room and food.

The workers had long since lost the right to strike. Stopping work was equivalent to treason. The trade unions were deprived of even the nominal right to negotiate wages, which were already lower in terms of pur-

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chasing power than they had been under the Tsar.

Even in 1936, the best year we have on record since the twenties, the price of bread was fifteen times higher than it had been in 1914 and the price of meat about twelve times higher. The cost of clothing had risen even more steeply. Yet even according to Soviet statistics the average wage had risen only fourfold.

Few tourists, however, ever troubled to enter the shops and compare the prices of necessities with wages earned, and foreign Communists in spite of evidence to the contrary, spread propaganda that material conditions of the Russian workers had been greatly improved in Socialist Russia.

I remember once in Moscow reading in the *Manchester Guardian* how a careful British worker spent his unemployment dole. Arcadi and I calculated that to buy the diet available to an unemployed worker's family in England one required at least 1000 rubles in Moscow, which meant at least five times as much money as workers of average qualifications were then earning in Soviet Russia.

All the penalties and terror could not prevent starving men from leaving their jobs.

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The Soviet press was filled with complaints about "flagrant violations of labor discipline."

In a final attempt to tie the hungry workers to their jobs, and the dissatisfied peasants to the collective farms, Stalin resorted to an old Tsarist police measure in a more universal and rigorous form. The internal passport system was revived.

The whole urban population, and the peasants living near the large towns, had to secure residence permits. Subsequently no one was allowed to move from the town or village in which he lived, even for a single night, without permission from the police.

The internal passport, in which the social origins of each citizen were written down, was designed to clear out, and keep out, of Moscow and other large towns the floating population drawn there by the slightly better food supply available in the cities.

Violation of the internal passport regulations swelled the millions of Russians condemned to forced labor in concentration camps. Slave labor had become an essential factor in the economy of Russia, not too unlike the dependence of the Southern States on negro slavery before the American Civil War.

Life as a so-called "free-worker," bereft of



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nearly all freedom is bad enough; but the life of a slave laborer working for the vast organizations controlled by the NKVD is indescribable in its inhumanity and brutality.

Perhaps the breaking of the human spirit into submissive, thoughtless robots is the most terrible feature of Stalin's Russia. Humanity is bowed down. Everyone cringes before his superiors, and those who abase themselves seek outlets in bullying and terrifying the unfortunates beneath them. Integrity, courage and charity disappear in the stifling atmosphere of cant, falsehood and terror.

Jane and I decided that the best term to apply to the "new and better" society being created in Soviet Russia was *industrial feudalism*. Freedom of movement, collective bargaining for wage increases, strikes and other such evils of capitalist society had been finally abolished. *The workers as well as the peasants had become serfs of the Party which owned the state.*

## XI

### *A Home at Last*

BOTH JANE AND I had Volga German girls working for us, when it was specially decreed that all the German peasants should return home. My Hilda had no parents and Jane's Sophie was one of thirteen children of a poor peasant. We both moved heaven and earth to keep them from the death by starvation which they assured us awaited them at home.

In Hilda's case the decree was particularly brutal since the spring floods had cut off her village from the nearest railway station forty miles away. Hilda wept and wept, and each day we tried to get her a permit to stay in Moscow. I spent hours at the *Militia* (police) station, and hours at the Public Prosecutor's, pleading, begging that at least she be allowed to stay with me until the

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spring floods subsided. All ordinary avenues of appeal proved useless.

Hilda's aunt worked for Max Hoeltz, the famous German Spartacist leader. Early one morning we went to the Hotel Metropole to ask his help. I did not then know that he was practically a prisoner. Shortly after I talked to him about Hilda he was murdered by the OGPU. His insistent demand that he be allowed to return to Germany to fight the Nazis had aroused fears in the Comintern.

Hoeltz was known to be more popular with the German working class than any of Moscow's appointed leaders of the German Communist Party. He had been a modern Robin Hood in Germany in the Twenties and never an obedient servant of the Comintern. It was feared that if he got back to Germany he would successfully oppose the Comintern line of collaboration with the Nazis to overthrow German democracy in hopes of a Nazi-Communist alliance against the West.

I knew nothing of his situation that morning that I talked with him in the Metropole Hotel about Hilda. He told me he had no influence. He had tried in other cases and failed.

This tall, handsome man sat disconsolate,

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sad and suffering at the universal misery which surrounded him. \*

He did not even attempt to pretend to me that there was any justification for the inhuman cruelty of Stalin's government. Hoeltz was the only foreign Communist leader I met in Moscow who retained his integrity and his human sympathy for the oppressed and powerless common people, in whose name the Revolution had been carried out. Although he could not help Hilda, he treated her as a friend whose troubles were as important as his own.

Max Hoeltz's end was tragic but at least he went down fighting. Before he was liquidated by the OGPU he beat up Fritz Heckert, the German representative in the Comintern who had announced that Hitler's victory was not a defeat for the German working class.

Some of my Moscow memories have faded, but I still remember as clearly as if it had happened yesterday my visit to Max Hoeltz a few days before his "suicide" was announced. He was shot and his body flung into the Volga by the secret police. I shall never forget that he thought the life of an obscure servant girl was worth saving at a time when he had already decided to sacrifice his own.

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A few days later I went to a friend of ours who had been and probably still was, in the secret police. He was a decent little man, very fond of a good joke and relishing my husband's wit. Completely cynical, a *bon vivant*, a beautiful singer and a strong drinker, he was also kind hearted and had heaps of friends. He gave me a note to a high *Militia* official. At last I had secured the right patronage. Hilda was saved.

The sad end of the story of Hilda is that she was demoralized by fear and idleness. During the month I had struggled to save her life, she had done no work. She had wept and stood in queues and wept again. Slowly she degenerated in the atmosphere of the New Moscow Hotel, and I am afraid eventually became "one of those of whom we know there are none," as E. M. Delafield describes the prostitute she saw in the Metropole Hotel in Moscow.

Michael had already gone home to England and soon Jane felt she could no longer stand living in Moscow. There was no reason for her to remain. She was not tied to unhappy Russia by a husband she loved and she pined for the freedom of England.

My mother had been living in Jane's room and Jane took her back to England with her. We now had no place for mother to stay

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and she had accumulated enough of her tiny income and the rent from her apartment in London to live for a while at home. For the first time since Arcadi came from China I was alone with him in the Russian wilderness where I dared take no one else into my confidence.

I took over Jane's servant, Sophie, for whom she had finally also won the passport battle. Sophie was a treasure; but I lost her, too. She went home to her village a year later for a vacation, and being cleaner, better dressed, and generally far more "cultured" than the peasant girls, succeeded in marrying the catch of the village, the tractor-driver Party member. Presumably by now having joined the village squirearchy, Sophie has forgotten her former hatred of the Soviet Government.

We had an anxious time securing a Moscow passport for Arcadi's former wife and her son. She had a job by this time, but her social origins were exceedingly bad. Her father had been a wealthy merchant who fled to the United States at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution and her brother was an engineer with the General Electric Company in New York, where Arcadi had met and married her.

Partly out of fear that his son would be

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sent away from Moscow, and partly because they now had no room of their own but were sharing one with relatives, Arcadi and I gave them one of the two rooms which we at last obtained in February 1933. Her passport was then secured as Arcadi's dependent living under his roof.

The position of ex-wives and also of mistresses under Soviet law as interpreted by the courts was very peculiar. Although it was expressly stated that bigamy was illegal, a man was forbidden to turn out of his apartment or to refuse to support any woman by whom he had had a child, whether the child had been born in or out of wedlock.

A case referred to by N. V. Krilenko when Commissar of Justice, in an article written in the *Bolshevik* in September 1936, is an illustration.

He wrote:

"We shall give several examples showing the influence of the old social order on Soviet family relations, and the revolutionary effect of Soviet law as it protects the family and teaches those who still follow the old customs.

"Here is the case of Citizen and Citizeness Gentschke, who dismissed their servant Lebedeva and ordered her to leave their flat. Lebedeva had worked for Gentschke

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as a servant from 1927 to 1929. In 1929 Lebedeva ceased to receive payment for her work, for Citizen Gentschke started to have sexual intercourse with her. In the year 1935 the Gentschkes terminated the labor contract with Lebedeva and told her to clear out.

"Lebedeva appealed to the court and said she was not a servant but in fact the wife of Gentschke. In her passport, which had been obtained for her by Gentschke, she was shown as his dependent, and this is why she had a right to live in his flat. Lebedeva, an illiterate young woman, proved that she had been violated by Gentschke and had lived with him from 1929 to 1935.

"The higher court to which the case was eventually transferred, did not recognize her as Gentschke's wife because Soviet law only recognizes a marriage if a common life together has been declared, differing only from a registered marriage by the fact that no registration has been made.

"If the Court had recognized Lebedeva as a legal wife it would have meant recognizing a double marriage, which is not permissible in our law. Gentschke's behavior from the point of view of civil rights deserved criminal punishment for deceit and exploitation."



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It is nevertheless implied that Citizen and Citizeness Gentschke had to allow Lebedeva to continue living in their flat. In another case of which details were given, a servant called Rakitnikova who had been the domestic worker of a Dr. Levinson, and had had two children by him, won her case in the courts when the doctor wanted to turn her out of his house. It was decided that he must give her a third of his flat. In the case of a mistress who had had children by a man, he must allow them all to live in his flat and must help to support them, or support them entirely if the woman is not working.

Anna Abramovna, having been Arcadi's wife before he divorced her in 1928 and having in addition had a son by him, had a legal right to obtain a passport as his dependent.

Marriage and divorce prior to the tightening up of the laws in 1936 entailed merely a visit to *Zaks* for registration, or, in the case of marriages, it was enough to register with the House Committee of the apartments as husband and wife jointly occupying a room or flat. This constituted a common law marriage, and by it the wife secured the same rights as if the marriage had been registered at the *Zaks*.

Arcadi and I were thus married in

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common law, but we had never registered at the *Zaks* because I was afraid of losing my British citizenship if I did. Originally I had wished to retain my British passport in order to be able to travel abroad freely, for Russian citizens had the greatest difficulty in obtaining visas to enter foreign countries. Later it became a question, not of the value of my British passport in entering other countries, but of its value in permitting me to escape from the Soviet Union.

Divorce in Russia until 1935 required only a statement at *Zaks* by either husband or wife that the marriage was annulled. Today it is harder for one of the parties to obtain a divorce without the consent of the other, and the fee for a divorce has been made almost prohibitive for the mass of the population. It used to cost only a ruble or two. Now the cost is hundreds of rubles and increases so steeply after the second divorce that only the rich can afford several divorces.

Most of the domestic relations cases brought before the courts arise from the difficulties caused by the housing problem. Even when both husband and wife wish to separate, it is almost impossible for them to do so because neither can find a room to move into.

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One couple of our acquaintance who had twice divorced each other always got together again because they had to go on living in the same flat. Since most families have only one room it is almost impossible to separate, just as young people are often unable to get married and therefore have light affairs instead because they cannot get a room to live in.

Often married couples have to share the one room occupied by mother and father and brothers and sisters. A girl I had known in London lived with her mother and husband, who was also her uncle, in one very small room for years. Her uncle was a composer and the piano occupied nearly half their living space.

The Soviet Government, however, ascribes all the misdemeanors of its citizens as due to the "remnants of bourgeois ideology," and to the "rottenness of the old world, which still continues to poison the Soviet atmosphere."

Krilenko cites a number of cases in which men tried to turn their former wives, or even their children by a former wife, out into the street in order to make room for a new one. He gives the following example of a wicked worker whom bourgeois ideology

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had caused to behave in a most shameless way:

"To illustrate the influence of old traditions, even among working class people, we will cite the case of Alexander Maloletkin, a worker in a machine tool factory in Moscow. He looked on woman as a chattel. He showed an unbounded cynicism in his sexual relations.

"Maloletkin met a woman working in the same factory. He swore that he loved her and promised to marry her. Two days later he told her that he did not intend to marry her and did not want to see her again. He did the same thing to another woman in the same factory, and to another woman in a different factory. He had sexual intercourse with all these women and then mocked them and abandoned them.

"The women took the matter to court. . . . Unfortunately the judge then officiating had the same conceptions as Maloletkin. Maloletkin explained that he could not have married any of these women because in the first place they were light women, and in the second place because he had no room of his own. In the third place he said that he was married already and had a wife in the village. All these excuses were due to the strong

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influence on his mind of capitalist conceptions of woman and the family.

"In the sentence of the court it was written:

"O. knew perfectly well that Maloletkin had no room and could not get married. Therefore if he made a promise of marriage, the woman should have understood that a man may promise a lot of things at a moment of sexual excitement and should not have taken the promise seriously."

"This Court decision, which is impregnated with conceptions and a morality alien to us, was quashed in the Higher Court and the judge was dismissed."

As Marx had said, the cultural level cannot be higher than the material conditions on which it is based, and the Soviet theoretical conception of marriage has no reality in the absence of improved living standards—in particular housing accommodations—which would make a "new and higher morality" possible.

The abolition of legal abortions since 1935 has, of course, made life for Russian women very much harder, and intensified the housing shortage. The upper classes, as elsewhere, are little affected by the change. They can buy contraceptives or they have a

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high enough "cultural level" to avoid excessive childbearing.

But the women of the working class and the peasants now either have to resort secretly to unqualified abortionists, or maintain families of five, six, seven or more children in one room. Contraceptives are very rarely available for sale to the majority of the population.

For five months Arcadi and I lived under conditions unbelievable except in Moscow. We shared our kitchen and bathroom with Arcadi's divorced wife and child, and with another family of three persons, mother, father, and a boy of fourteen, who occupied the third room in the flat.

Anna Abramovna hated me so much that she always left the kitchen when I entered, and she forbade Arcadi's son to come into our room. If he wanted to talk to his father, he had to stand on the threshold. Her hatred did not prevent her accepting the share of my munificent *Insnab* rations which I regularly sent in to her.

But never once in those five months did we speak to each other, although inevitably we saw each other every day. I was quite willing to be friendly, but she nursed her hatred and sought to make Arcadi's son hate him as well as me. In her, indeed, what the Soviet

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press termed "the remnants of bourgeois ideology" were very strong. At last she secured a room elsewhere and for a few weeks we had our two rooms to ourselves.

Then I went to England to bring mother back to Moscow again. On this visit I found it even more difficult than on previous occasions to hold my tongue. Often in subsequent years I tried to recall what I may have said to be brought up against Arcadi later. I knew that no one in England had the remotest conception of what terror means. I knew that if I told them the truth about Russia they might unwittingly betray me.

But it was so hard to keep silent when such foolish nonsense was being talked about Russia. One of the hells that Dante never thought of is that of knowing the truth and not daring to speak it for the sake of those you love. I was probably indiscreet but the only two people to whom I freely unburdened my heart were Bertrand Russell and C. M. Lloyd, the Foreign Editor of the *New Statesman*. Both were discreet and intelligent and I know they never betrayed my confidence.

But there were others, whom I subsequently learned had spoken of my "anti-Soviet" attitude in spite of their promises. Yet I cannot blame them for in truth they

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knew not what they did. Few people brought up in the free atmosphere of England and America can have any conception of what terror means. During my short vacations in England I felt like a prisoner out on parole.

My most lasting memories of life in Moscow concern the three years Arcadi and I spent in our two rooms on *Ordinka* near the Moscow River. They were our first home together and our last, for we did not secure our long-promised flat until three months before Arcadi's arrest in April, 1936.

Badly built, with doors and windows of unseasoned wood which would not shut properly, unpapered and thinly white-washed walls, these two rooms were home. They were ours, not a temporarily secured shelter out of which we must move when the owners returned.

By American or English standards, we were living in a squalid tenement house. But by Soviet Russian standards we were housed almost like Communist aristocrats. We not only had two rooms to live in, but we had the luxury of gas for cooking instead of a smelly oil stove. And best of all we had a bathroom with a lavatory, which we had to share with only one other family.

My mother whom I had brought to Russia for the second time stayed with us a year



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and a half. After my baby was born Arcadi and I had little privacy, but we were happy in Ordinka Street.

The Barskis in the third room of our apartment were pleasant, cultured people who had lived for some years in South America. Sharing the small kitchen and the bathroom and toilet, we rarely quarreled and could cooperatively keep things decently clean. We even managed to get the flat more or less clear of the bugs which haunt most apartment houses in Moscow. This can only be done by scrupulous cleanliness and constant paraffining of floors and woodwork.

In the flats where we had occupied only one room, the bug plague could not be coped with since our neighbors' bugs would always invade us. Even in Ordinka we could not avoid occasionally bringing home bugs on our clothing after standing in the crowded streetcars. I protected my baby by standing the legs of his cot in tin cans filled with water.

I considered myself an expert bug-catcher. They bite you at night in bed and the art of catching them consists in switching on the light and turning down the bed-clothes all in a second. You then catch the bug in the act of retreating at top speed into the darkness under the mattress.

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At the beginning we had a gas water heater for the bath, and this in itself was a rare luxury in Moscow. Unfortunately, one morning a month or so before my son was born, it blew up while I was waiting for my bath. A shower of bricks fell around me, and Mrs. Barski rushed off for smelling salts, expecting at least a premature birth. We could never get the heater repaired, so future baths could be taken only by boiling kettles of water.

One of the minor annoyances of Soviet life was the impossibility of getting repairs done. Repairs are important when the standard of living is low, but they were not regarded as sufficiently important for State planners to recognize them officially. The government provided none, and any individual who set himself up as a tinker, tailor, or whatnot, was classed as a petty bourgeois and an enemy of the state. So naturally there was never any way of getting things mended, unless you were handy with hammer and saw and could obtain precious nails.

Our flat was on a top floor lately added to an old house. Above us was a great loft with beams which barely kept out the rain and snow. Up in that freezing cold loft at night, there would be dozens of starving peas-

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ants or beggars—mostly children. These wretched little waifs, the *bezprizornii*, came daily to plead for crusts.

Shivering with cold, they held out old tin cans for hot water. If one gave a piece of sugar to these poor children an ecstatic smile would break over their pale faces. Periodically the police would hound them out of their wretched shelter into the street, but after a few days there would be others.

One of the most terrible and pitiful sights I saw was one late afternoon in November 1933. Looking out of the window I saw police driving some wrecks of humanity down into the cellar of our building. More and more people were brought in as the evening fell. Going down into the courtyard I was told by other occupants of our apartment house what was happening.

The police were rounding up all the beggars and the homeless in the city prior to the November Revolution celebrations. The foreigners must not see the starving, homeless hordes, so they were all to be dumped outside Moscow.

Our cellar was one of the collection depots. Late in the evening trucks arrived, and the beggars were pushed into them. Some were sick, others lame. Many were children. They were to be taken forty or fifty miles outside

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Moscow and dumped on the road to die, like abandoned dogs or cats. If the stronger ones managed to straggle back to Moscow the celebrations would be over by the time they got there.

We all watched that pitiful exodus from our windows. A thin rain was falling and the air was damp and chilly. Although by this time I should have been conditioned to brutality I was pregnant and it made me sick. Those mothers down there with their cold and hungry children being driven out into the desolate countryside must be suffering unbearable anguish. It would have been more merciful to shoot them outright.

I shivered with icy foreboding at the world into which I should soon bring a child. But I am blessed, or cursed, with a sanguine temperament; and although I knew with my mind that one cannot escape from the Soviet Union, I still went on deluding myself in my heart that some day, somehow, Arcadi and I might get out.

My moral and political degeneration in the communist atmosphere had proceeded so far that I no longer hoped for the liberation of the Russian people. I dreamed of escape from the horrors of Stalin's Russia, not of the overthrow of his tyranny.

In my imagination I conceived of my

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brother Temple, back from the South Seas, sailing his yacht to the Black Sea and rescuing us. My mind played around with the idea. Arcadi and I could pretend to be going for a sail. Could I teach Arcadi to swim well enough to reach the yacht at night through the warm Crimean Sea?

Escape in fantastic day dreams about which I never told Arcadi helped make life bearable. He would have laughed at such romantic fantasy. We hardly ever spoke of our desire to get out of the Soviet prison house. It was too painful to talk about and too dangerous even to think of for fear our thoughts might later inadvertently become words and betray us.

Arcadi seemed to have resigned himself to life in Russia. He still got some satisfaction and comfort out of doing his job. After long hours of work he came home too tired to think very much.

I had less strenuous work and too much time for thinking. Since Jane's and Michael's departure I had felt myself cut off entirely from my old life in England. I keenly missed my two friends with whom I could talk freely in the long hours when Arcadi was still at the office and I sat at home waiting for him.

In those first years in Moscow I had be-

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lieved that one day we should all get out into the free world again. Now I knew that the past was utterly past, that we were inextricably caught in the Soviet web, and that a long vista of years in Russia stretched ahead of me. I myself could escape but since Arcadi could not it was futile to long for the free world we had both once lived in and foolishly left.

Arcadi and I loved each other dearly and we were together and soon we should have a child. After all, that was more than many people ever got out of life even in the free world outside. Our love knew neither jealousy nor antagonism. We were comrades in a real sense, helping each other, considerate of each other, and so close in thought and feeling that we had little need for words to reassure one another of the depth of affection between us.

Arcadi had a boyish playfulness which sweetened our relationship and kept him young in spite of his exhausting office life. Illusions and false political beliefs had originally brought us together. Disillusionment, trouble, and hardship, the need each of us had of the other, and an attraction which the years had welded into a oneness of body and spirit, had firmly united us.

We had lived so long in one tiny room,

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adapting ourselves the one to the other and never quarreling over small things as so many people with whole flats to live in do. I still felt, and I know Arcadi felt it too, that to be in prison-like Russia together was infinitely better than being separated in a free world.

Arcadi would again and again tell me to save myself, to leave him and go back to England. But he knew I never would. I had wept when I left England after the few months I spent there in the summer of 1933. I would have given up almost anything in the world, except Arcadi, to get out of Russia. But I had at long last adapted myself, learned to hide my thoughts and feelings in public, learned to avoid any political subjects in conversation, and to talk only about food or rooms or scandal, except to one or two intimate friends.

Material conditions had become slightly better. After the hellish years of starvation, life in 1934, 1935 and 1936 seemed almost tolerable. We did not know that soon starvation was to return, and that even the poor life of the middle thirties was to be but a breathing space between two eras of famine and terror.

In the last years of my life in Moscow conditions were both better and worse than in

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the days when I first lived the life of a Russian. We ourselves were better off and the mass of the people were suffering a little less than before or afterwards. But there was an ever increasing differentiation in the living standards between the rulers and the ruled, and between the skilled workers and the unskilled.

There was less actual starvation but the privileged were now more privileged and class distinctions more openly displayed. More and more commercial shops were opened with their windows full of food and clothing which ordinary people could not afford to buy.

Earlier when the meat, butter, chocolates, fruit, shoes and clothing had been supplied to the Communist aristocracy in closed distributors the masses were not fully aware of the great gulf between them and their rulers. Luxury had not been openly displayed but hidden and unavowed. Now it was obvious to the dullest intelligence that the fruits of their labor were not for the working class and probably never would be. A bitter saying began to be heard in Moscow,

“Yes, they have constructed socialism for themselves.”



## XII

### *My Son Is Born*

MY SON was born on March 10, 1934, and I began the happiest period of my life in Moscow. In any society at any historical period men and women have the same fundamental needs and satisfactions, and perhaps children are the greatest of these. With my son's birth I began to accept life, to be more restful and more calm.

I could even forget politics for long periods and become absorbed in Jon's needs and his development. In fact, I became far too absorbed and was abruptly awakened one day by Mark Kazanin saying to me that it would matter far more to my son in the future, what his mother was and had done, than the fact that I had personally attended to all his wants.

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Mark, an intellectual of the type one rarely finds outside Russia, considered me far too much of the earth and resented both my love for my husband and the fact that I had been so human as to have a child at all. But he was good for me, both as a stimulant and an irritant. Without his suggestions and encouragement I should probably never have written *Japan's Feet of Clay* and would thus have failed to keep my link with the Western world outside. It is probable that this book saved me from being arrested with my husband two years after my baby was born.

Jon's birth was a long and painful business. I was thirty-six and he weighed nine pounds. I spent two nights and a day in a ward with nine other women who screamed most of the time. I had arrived about 4 A.M. after waiting two hours for Arcadi to find a taxi to get me to the maternity hospital. The doctors and nurses, working twelve-hour shifts, had no time to pay attention to a pregnant woman except at the actual moment of birth.

Three times in the second night I was brought into the delivery room, only to be taken back to the ward when I failed to give birth. No one offered me any advice or help, and no relief was prescribed for the pain.

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Narcotics of any kind were ruled out, since the hospitals had none. During the time I spent in the delivery room I saw many children born, for there were no screens and I just lay in pain watching the babies of others being delivered.

Finally at about nine o'clock on the second morning, at the changing of the shifts, a doctor examined me and decided that my baby's heart might soon cease to beat. He gave me an injection to revive my strength, and he and another doctor threw themselves in turn upon my chest and abdomen. Meanwhile a third doctor cut me a little, and at last my son was born.

I lay and watched my screaming baby being cleaned and dressed, and then a ticket with his number was tied around my wrist. I was given a bowl of soup where I lay flat on my back on the padded table, and I wrote a note to my husband waiting anxiously downstairs. I was then left where I was until three o'clock that afternoon before anyone had time to stitch me up. This was finally done without an anesthetic.

After that I was moved into a comfortable bed in a ward for eight persons. The room was clean, but the windows were tightly shut. Here I remained eight days without

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seeing Arcadi or my mother, since no visitors were allowed in the hospital for fear of infection.

I was in one of the best maternity hospitals in Russia, the Clara Zetkin Birth House, where I had made a reservation months before by a combination of wangling and money. The food was ample; but I nearly suffocated for lack of fresh air.

Our babies were brought to us to be fed all swaddled up, but my son was allowed to have his head uncovered because he had so much hair. I longed to relieve him of the weight and discomfort of his swaddling clothes, and did so at once when I got him home.

A few days after I came home Arcadi became terribly ill. They feared he had typhus, but in the end it wasn't this dread disease and he recovered. The Russian servant I then had, Masha, quit in a panic when Arcadi became sick. It was impossible to hire a trained nurse and with only my mother to nurse him I had to get up. However, having a child agreed with me. I felt well, I looked years younger, and I had plenty of milk.

Mrs. Barski, in the third room of our apartment, was kind and helpful. Her only fault was her incessant chatter. In the morn-

## *My Son Is Born*

ings she would follow Arcadi around talking, even into the bathroom while he shaved. On the rare occasions when I quarreled with her she would object to my hanging my baby's diapers in the hall to dry and treat us to a few days of dignified silence. When we were friendly, Arcadi, exasperated by her unceasing conversation would say to me privately: "Can't you pick a quarrel with Mrs. Barski so that she won't talk so much?"

Soon after my son was born I acquired Emma, the last and best of the Volga German servant girls I employed. She became a devoted friend, and was the only human being besides Arcadi's sister who still dared to correspond with me after my husband was arrested.

Emma had red hair and a quick temper. She horrified our Russian friends by "thouing" Arcadi and me and in general behaving like one of the family. She loved my son and she loved us, and, although I had to teach her everything, she was intelligent and quick to learn.

I had to bring my boy up on a book and with my mother's help, for Russian ideas about babies were almost medieval. Babies were all swaddled both when they went out and in their cradles, windows were never

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opened, and the doctors at the *Consultazia* (advisory clinic for mothers) said one must on no account hold them out before they were six months old.

It was accepted that a baby should either be constipated or have diarrhoea. I had to trust to the instructions in the Truby King book I had and to such advice as I could get by air mail from an old school friend in London.

However, since I was able to nurse Jon entirely for six months and partly for nine, he was a healthy, happy baby and nothing ever went seriously wrong. There were, of course, no baby foods to be had in Russia. If a mother could not nurse she had to give plain cow's milk and water. Luckily some Australian Communist friends of ours, the Baracchis, were then living on foreign currency exchange at the New Moscow Hotel, and had an *Insnab* ration book.

They gave me their rations for four months, and this enabled us to live so well that I kept up my strength even when I went back to work and had to rush home at twelve and climb five flights of stairs to nurse Jon. We had plenty of money, for my *Lancashire and the Far East* had at last after many delays, been published in Moscow. I had re-

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ceived several thousand rubles in royalties, and this lasted a long time.

The vicissitudes of publication in the USSR are well illustrated by what happened to my book. It was translated originally in 1931 and an advance on royalties was paid to me. Then publication was delayed because an introduction praising it had been written by Safarov, who promptly thereafter fell into disgrace.

Next the Russian manuscript was lost when the Communist Party publishing office moved to a new location. Finally two years later Karl Radek discovered the English edition, sent for me, praised it very warmly, and arranged for its immediate translation and publication. It was once again translated into Russian and finally published, and I got a new contract and was paid over again.

Since the autumn of 1932 I had been employed by the Institute of World Economy and Politics, and my work there required no regular hours of attendance, although I had to spend a good deal of time away from home in the library.

When my son was nine months old I paid a flying visit to England to make a contract for my projected book on Japan.

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Soon after my return, in March 1935, my mother went home. She had been with us a year and a half on this second visit and now that we had Jon, life in Moscow in two rooms for five of us, including Emma, had become very difficult.

I was trying to provide English hygienic conditions for Jon, which meant his sleeping with the transom open in winter in a dark room. So in the evenings we all had to sit in the other room. At night Arcadi, Jon and I shared one room and Emma and my mother the other.

The night my mother left I received a cable from Temple's friend, Rab, in London that my brother had got blood poisoning in Fiji and might die. My mother was already on her way to England, and it was too late to stop her. She had to face the news of his death alone ten days later. That was in April, just a year before I was to lose Arcadi as well.

Temple's death brought home to me the passing of the years and of the hopes which had gone with them. I remembered our happy childhood together, our college days after the war when the world had seemed to me a place of infinite promise, a progressive world on the way to the establishment of a just society. Temple had never believed



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this. Romance for him had not lain in politics but in the South Seas, in getting away from civilization, not in remolding it nearer to the heart's desire.

He had died in the warmth and beauty of the tropics, but for him too the dream world in which he sailed freely for a while had become, after his second marriage, the humdrum provincial life of Suva where he had settled down to practice medicine. In one of the last letters he ever wrote he said to my mother: "Freda's letter to me was in tone and spirit very sweet. Neither of us quite seems to have found our new world. Moral—do not read your children romantic tales in their infancy. However hard-boiled they may become afterwards, the original taint remains."

That last summer Arcadi and I took a *datcha* in the hot summer months because of Jon. Life at the *datcha* was wearing because in these wooden houses in the villages outside Moscow everything was primitive. Cooking had to be done on oilstoves, water had to be fetched in buckets, and food was obtained mainly in the city and carried the long distance from the local station.

Our servant could not possibly do everything and look after my young child. So I had to do a great deal of the housework my-

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self as well as travel to Moscow once or twice a week to the Institute. At the same time I was endeavoring to write *Japan's Feet of Clay*.

Arcadi could not get to the *datcha* every evening, but he was always with us over the weekend, and I sometimes spent a night in town.

The *datcha* we lived in was a large house which Kalmanofsky, the Chairman of Promexport, got from the Soviet for the summer for about 600 rubles and which he exploited by renting out separate rooms at 500 rubles apiece. This was the normal practice. We had two rooms and a terrace. The other three families living in the house had only one room each. Kalmanofsky used two for himself, his beautiful wife, a well-known actress, and for his brother, who was a non-Party engineer.

The other women in the *datcha* thought me very bold because I dared to walk alone in the dusk from the railroad station along the narrow path through the forest. It was true that murders were reported with disquieting frequency, murders committed merely for the purpose of stealing the victim's clothing. But, as I wore only a simple *sarafan* (a sleeveless cotton dress held up by straps) in the hot summer, I felt pretty safe.

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Russian women are usually very timid, as I had learned long before in Tokyo, where they had been afraid to go alone down the dark lane behind the Trade Representation building. But Emma feared neither men nor governments. Superbly built, with arms strong enough to knock a man down, she had a scornful contempt for the pretty, delicate *Kazaikas* (housewives) who neither toiled nor spun, and who, even if their husbands were poor, spent their time in idleness.

In late August and September when the weather was chilly, we longed for wood to make a fire. But I could not buy fuel in the village, although there was a forest all around us. One day there was a mighty thunderstorm, one of the most magnificent I have ever seen. Three trees in the *datcha* garden were struck by lightning, one falling over the terrace and just missing our house.

We were delighted. Here was some wood at last. It was forbidden to cut trees—they belonged to the village Soviet—but we might take the branches. So we started to work, and Emma and I filled our terrace with enough wood to burn for many days. The other wives sent their servants and looked upon me with disapproval because I demeaned myself by such physical labor.

“How can you,” one of them asked, “an

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intellectual, a writer, go out with the servants to cut wood!"

Five years before, no such remark could have been made. But already the Soviet upper classes had developed their caste theories. Moreover, since Russian men for the most part preferred ultra-feminine women, all who could do so lived up to this ideal.

They prinked and painted, wore the highest heeled shoes they could find, would go without food to buy the fantastically expensive materials now on sale at a few shops, and considered me a hopeless blue-stocking and far too democratic in my behavior. The fact that Emma called me and Arcadi by our first names shocked them. What they really objected to was Emma's status in my household. It made their own servants discontented to see us treat her as our equal and our friend.

Russian summers are usually lovely and warm, but that summer at the *datcha* it was rainy and cold. Having spent so much money on the rental so that Jon might have air and sunshine, we found the weather very disappointing. I was working hard and getting very little sleep as I used to arise at six o'clock with Jon. Although we were living in the country we now had much less

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nourishing food than at any time since the first year of our life in Russia.

*Insnab* had been discontinued in the early summer. *Gort* closed down in the fall. Everything had to be bought in the commercial shops or at the peasant markets at commercial prices. Arcadi's salary remained at the same level of 600 rubles which he had been earning for two years past, and while working on my book I was making only my minimum salary of 300 rubles.

We sold some old clothes, and Arcadi got one month's extra salary as a bonus. I had received a few English pounds as an advance on my book, which we spent gingerly at *Torgsin*. We managed to feed Jon well and to live, but we went rather short of food and I twice came down with 'flu. Temple's death had saddened me, and I felt ill and old and depressed. I wrote to my mother that I realized the best of life is over before one knows it has begun.

Finally in the fall after we returned to Moscow, I had a breakdown which the doctor called a heart neurosis or something like that. The Institute of World Economy and Politics which employed me sent me to a very good sanatorium for five weeks. It was reserved for scientific workers of high qualifications or Party members. The food was

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excellent and I had a beautiful room to myself.

Soon I recovered the health which had enabled me to stand all the rigors of life in Moscow, and bear up under the physical and nervous strain to which even privileged mothers are subject in Soviet Russia. Emma had looked after Jon and Arcadi during my absence but I had worried about them and was happy to return to Ordinka Street.

### XIII

#### *My Institute Is Purged*

WHEN I RETURNED to Moscow I felt well again and the depression had lifted from my spirits. I settled down to intensive concentration on my book. This writing and the previous research work I had done at the Institute of World Economy and Politics gave me a good deal of satisfaction. The Institute provided me with about the best employment I could have found in all Russia.

As a "senior scientific worker" in the Pacific Ocean Cabinet, for three years I did research work on Japan in particular and the Far East in general. I received a regular salary and in addition was paid for every article or report I wrote. We scientific workers had our own individual plan to fulfill and worked very much as we liked. I had

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to attend meetings of various kinds, but otherwise I spent only as much time at the Institute as I pleased, or as I felt my work required.

The head of the Institute, the well-known Hungarian Marxist, Eugene Varga, was a decent, kindly, and intelligent old-man. He always toed the Party line and survived successive waves of purges, but he was a real worker and tried to keep out of his Institute unqualified Party men looking for a soft job. Some attention was paid to scientific exactitude. Figures might be twisted to have various meanings, but at least the figures were accurate.

The Institute contained many sections. There was a statistical bureau producing a *Konjunktur* journal on the model of a German business conditions publication, and there were various other divisions studying and analyzing economic conditions in every part of the world. Since my assignment was Japan, and since, luckily for me, Japan remained unfriendly to the USSR all the time I worked at the Institute, I could do real research and honest writing.

We had a wonderful library containing practically every book, old or new, in English, German or French I needed or desired to read. We had the newspapers from all



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countries and an excellent press-clipping department for reference purposes. It was, in fact, a first-class research institute, where, because it was occupied in making reports on economic and political conditions and developments abroad, I could do satisfactory work.

The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, and the Commissariat of Foreign Trade, as well as the Comintern used the reports we produced. They might make queer uses of them, but that did not directly concern us nor greatly affect the quality of our work.

There was a good story told about Varga which illustrates the little value of the political side of our efforts. While in Berlin, Varga received a telegram from the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow demanding that he should at once prepare a report on economic conditions in Europe. A few days later he wired back,

"Analysis ready, telegraph at once what *perspectives* should be given."

In plain English, Varga was asking for instructions as to what he was required to prove by his figures. The story could have been an invention, but it illustrates perfectly how Communists use economic facts to prove a political thesis decreed from above,

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instead of deducing the political developments from the economic conditions, as intelligent Marxists are supposed to do.

At the Institute I knew many decent and intelligent men and women. There was a somewhat cleaner and less hypocritical atmosphere than in most other Soviet institutions, a little less frantic pushing and jealous denunciation, a little more interest in work, and generally a "higher level of culture," as the Russians would describe it. I never dared to speak freely or openly, but I felt that many of my Communist co-workers knew that I knew that they knew what was the real state of the USSR and of research work under Stalin's tyranny.

I was in and yet not of the life of the Institute. I was a foreigner and an English citizen. English and Americans were then the most favored foreigners in Moscow. This was the period of the Popular Front line in Comintern policy, and every effort was being made to conciliate British and American public opinion.

I spoke Russian very badly. I deliberately did not attempt to improve my pronunciation or my grammar since I could take refuge in language difficulties to save myself from the necessity of making speeches at meetings. So I escaped the necessity of lying

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and being a hypocrite and the dangers of denunciation if I did not publicly dissemble.

I did my work conscientiously. As I am naturally of a friendly disposition, people did not dislike me. In fact they were very nice to me. I never sought to acquire a higher position by calumniating others, and I suppose that most of my fellow scientific workers felt I was harmless and lacking in ambition and might as well be left unmolested.

Upon one occasion when it was reported to me that I had been criticized behind my back, I took the bull by the horns, marched in to Voitinsky, and demanded, in what Jane used to call my best British imperialist manner, an investigation of the accusation. My reaction was so unexpected and unusual that it took Voitinsky aback, and the attack on me was quashed.

Mark, who also worked at the Institute as an expert on China was highly amused. He said that the normal Russian way of dealing with such denunciations, would have been to start a counter-whispering campaign against the man who had accused me. But my English lack of finesse and method of direct attack were so unusual and unexpected as to have disarmed my enemies. However, I fully recognized the fact that

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only my British passport had enabled me to get away with it. No Russian could have dared to risk it.

The German Communists at our Academy, and also at the Marx Engels Institute nearby where Jane had worked, were in a most unhappy situation. Their excess zeal and very sincerity got them into trouble. They worked hard to learn the Russian language and to become an integral part of Soviet society.

They religiously studied their *Pravda* and *Izvestia* and the Communist Party resolutions. They took the Party line seriously, and tried to understand it. In consequence they often rushed in where angels feared to tread.

Germans were happy and proud to be able to make speeches and to show how thoroughly they understood Communist Party doctrine. Since the Party line and the interpretation of the sacred texts varied from season to season, this was a very dangerous way to behave.

My complete withdrawal from politics, my indifference to the whole sorry game, and my poor knowledge of the Russian language enabled me to sit or stand through the meetings in safety, my thoughts miles away.

But the Germans wanted to testify, and

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this often brought them to disaster. The poor devils still believed in Communism and were bewildered, confused, and undone when the Party line changed overnight, or a new interpretation was given to last month's Party resolution which they had so carefully studied.

Also the Germans, many of them refugees from fascism, some of them escaped prisoners from German concentration camps, were usually honest and painfully sincere. Nor had they lost their personal integrity. It was difficult, almost impossible, for them to lie and cheat.

I remember the case of one German couple at the Institute. The husband was condemned to prison as a Trotskyist. The wife was told she could keep her job if she would publicly denounce him as a Trotskyist spy, and repudiate him. She protested his innocence and refused to do so. So she was thrown out, to starve. However, there was a rumor that Varga, who was a very humane man, secretly secured her a job as a factory laborer in a remote provincial town.

The spirit of many of the German Communists who had taken refuge in the Soviet Union was broken in time. Looked upon always as potential foreign spies, disliked or envied for their superior knowledge or in-

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telligence or diligence, with no government to protect them, and persuaded or forced to become Russian citizens, they were completely at the mercy of the Soviet government.

Those who had been active revolutionaries in Germany were most suspected, and thousands disappeared during the great purges. Others became as shameless as the Russians in calumniating their comrades to try to save themselves by lying, hypocrisy, and false accusations.

American and British Party members, and in lesser degree the French, were then on the contrary the favored sons or daughters of the Soviet fatherland. There were so few Communists in the West that minor deviations were forgiven them. In Moscow they could count upon an easy life and a good position without any great effort on their part.

I was no longer a member of the Communist aristocracy. I had let my membership in the British Communist Party lapse and had not tried to transfer to the Russian Communist Party. Nevertheless as an *Anglichanka* (Englishwoman) I was in a privileged position. Moreover the fact that I had had a book published both in England and

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the Soviet Union added greatly to my prestige.

Some of the reports I had written on Japanese economics had been very favorably received. One of them, on Japan's food resources and the likely effect of war on her economy, had been utilized by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, which in effect meant the Soviet Government. So my stock was pretty high in spite of the fact that I was no longer a member of the Communist Party.

Only once was I seriously attacked. This was at a *chiska* shortly before my son was born. At these periodic "cleansings of the apparatus" everyone had to appear in a large assembly room before all his or her fellow workers to be questioned concerning social origins, work, general behavior and worthiness. I was denounced on this occasion on the charge that five years or so before I had written articles for the "capitalist press." Had I not been a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* while in Japan?

It was still the ultra-Left period of Comintern history. The Popular Front and democratic masquerade did not start until 1935. So the accusation was quite a serious one. However I was saved by a friend rising to

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my defense to point out that my work for the *Manchester Guardian* had been a permissible camouflage for my revolutionary activities in the Far East.

Others did not escape so easily. There was one poor Jewish woman, a widow with two children to support, who was denounced for having had her son circumcised fourteen years earlier. She could not deny the accusation and she lost her Party card and was dismissed from our Institute.

The Soviet Government even in those days denied that it persecuted religion but it was a fact that anyone known to go to church or to a synagogue, or to have any religious beliefs, could rarely, if ever, obtain a good job. Membership in the Communist Party with the privileges this gave was, of course, out of the question for either Christians or orthodox Jews.

My work at the Communist Academy kept me in touch with the outside world, kept my intelligence alive, and enabled me to earn a living without selling my soul. It also gave me the opportunity to write *Japan's Feet of Clay*, which in the future was to save me and my son from destitution in England. The prestige of writing a book for publication in England rendered me almost im-



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mune from attack, and the work on it gave me immense satisfaction.

My detestation of Japanese tyranny and hypocrisy was second only to my hatred of Soviet tyranny and hypocrisy, and it seemed to me that the world had almost as many illusions about Japan as about Russia. I could not do anything about the Russian illusions, but at least I could tear the veil from the face of Japanese tyranny.

At the Institute I had access to an immense quantity of material and time to do real research work, and the year I had previously spent in Japan gave me the necessary background. The fact that I had managed to make a contract for the book with Faber and Faber in England before I wrote it, so impressed the Institute that I was allowed to spend a year working on it without interference or supervision.

I remember, though, that when it was finished and I had given some chapters to one of my few trusted friends to read he advised me to take out what I had written concerning outward conformity to the state creed and expressions of enthusiastic loyalty under a tyrannical government. It was too obvious, he said, that I really meant the USSR when writing about Japan!

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The Pacific Ocean Cabinet of our Institute became the Russian branch of the Institute of Pacific Relations when the Kremlin switched over to the policy of establishing good relations with liberal capitalist organizations and groups abroad. To keep up appearances a room was taken in another part of the town and a notice put up on the door saying "Soviet Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations." When representatives of the American Council visited Moscow a few members of our Institute would be delegated to sit in this room and receive the foreigners.

In 1936, however, the whole staff of our Pacific Ocean Cabinet had an all-day-long session at the Institute with E. C. Carter, Owen Lattimore and Harriet Moore, leading lights of the Institute of Pacific Relations. I was a little surprised at the time that these Americans should defer so often and so completely to the Russian viewpoint.

I was still more astonished in the evening when Mr. Carter addressed a large gathering of Moscow Communist "actives" as leading members of the Party were called. Afterward Philip Rabinovitch remarked to me with a smile that it was strange that Mr. Carter who had formerly been Secretary of

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the World Y.M.C.A. spoke almost like a good Bolshevik.

Owen Lattimore found it difficult at first to submit to the discipline required of Friends of the Soviet Union. He told me a few months later in London how he had almost lost his job as Editor of *Pacific Affairs* because he had published an article by the Trotskyist, Harold Isaacs.

In later years in the United States it did not astonish me to find the Institute of Pacific Relations following the same general line as the *Daily Worker* in regard to China and Japan.

I imagine the Institute of World Economy and Politics must have greatly changed since my day. In 1936 the great purge was seriously affecting our organization. When the leaders in the Communist Party fall they drag down many lesser men with them.

For instance, when Madyar, who had been the chief theoretician of the Chinese revolution, was disgraced and imprisoned after Kirov's murder at the end of 1935, there began a strenuous heresy hunt.

The Red professors and scientific workers who specialized on China all started thumbing through each other's old books and articles to discover Trotskyist deviations or

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signs of Madyar's influence. Since Madyar's word had been law to us, this was not difficult. Many a co-worker of mine in the Pacific Ocean Cabinet felt imperiled and tried to denounce his neighbor to prove his loyalty to Stalin and to escape being denounced himself.

The situation was all the worse because Voitinsky, the chief of our department, had played a prominent role in the Comintern in 1927 and had then been made a scapegoat, together with Borodin, for the tragic fiasco of the Chinese revolution.

Voitinsky had come back into favor only a few years before, and it is always those who have "deviated" and been disgraced in the past and then reinstated who are most unscrupulous about others. When the purge became serious, Voitinsky started accusing almost everyone under him. All those who worked on China feared for their jobs or their lives.

Soon the whole Institute was panic stricken by the purge. Varga dismissed his brilliant Vice-Director, Melnitskaya, a woman of great intelligence and character and a real scholar. She managed to survive by taking an obscure position helping to produce the Encyclopaedia then being completed, but she has probably been liquidated

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by now. The other woman Party members were very jealous of her. She had been a Trotskyist years before. Her husband, who worked at the Marx Engels Institute, was already under suspicion.

I left Soviet Russia before the storm reached its height, so the fate of most of the men and women I worked with for three and a half years is unknown to me. But by noting the names of those who still write for the publications of the Institute, I perceive that the non-Party men fared best.

The Communists I knew have generally disappeared. One exception is Rogoff who had the desk next to mine and whom I met in China as chief Tass correspondent in 1938. He had never written a book and was not much of a scholar so I suppose he never had any provable deviations.

Mao Tse-tung and the other Chinese Communist leaders remained prudently in Yenan in their own Soviet Chinese territory where they could not easily be interfered with although they accepted Moscow's orders. We, the scientific workers at the Communist academy together with the personnel of the China division of the Comintern, were held responsible for their mistakes, failures and deviations. We who supplied them with their theoretical and practical instructions had to

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make quick turns when the Comintern line changed.

Early in 1935 the Seventh Congress of the Comintern switched all the Communist parties of the world over to the Popular Front line or Trojan horse tactic. The Social Democrats, Labor Parties and Trade Unions of the West whom we had hitherto denounced as Social Fascists, worse than outright Nazis, were now to be counted as our allies.

Similarly, in China, the Communists were instructed to cease fighting Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang and to try to make an alliance with them against Japan. The Chinese Communists were further instructed to cease killing landowners and to represent themselves as liberal agrarian reformers.

Thus overnight everything we had said and written in previous years became heresy. The wise so-called scientific workers were those who had always taken care to say opposite things at the same time, and thus ensure themselves against sudden changes in the Party line. Every one of us bore in mind the old Soviet precept:

*If you think don't speak!*

*If you speak don't write!*

*If you write don't publish!*

*If you publish recant immediately!*

## XIV

### *Tricks with Statistics*

"IT IS ONLY when the people submit blindly that a master can order tremendous sacrifices to produce very little."

Thus spoke the Abbé Custine concerning one of Stalin's prototypes, the "Iron Tsar," Nicholas I, who made it a crime for workers to strike. In the Abbé's eyes the edifices erected by the Tsars represented "not the force of a great country, but the uselessly wasted sweat of a great people."

Tourists from the "capitalist world" to Stalin's empire were less perceptive than the clerical visitor from France to the nineteenth-century empire of the Romanovs. They admired the gigantic edifices and were indifferent to the wasted sweat and the misery of the Russian people.

Communists and fellow travelers, many

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of whom at home had never seen the inside of a factory or a power station, journalists and authors, schoolteachers and "intellectuals" of all kinds, came on conducted tours of the Soviet Union and worshipped before the shrine of the machine.

It reminded me of the story I was told in Moscow by a Jewish-Russian immigrant to the United States. He came with other emigrants from a village in South Russia. Arrived in Philadelphia, he and his fellow villagers were astounded at the streetcars, the automobiles, and the factories.

They had never in their lives seen these things before. They did not know that they existed in Europe, and therefore became firmly convinced that the United States was the most wonderful country in the world.

Many of the tourists to the Soviet Union were like this. The factories and power stations in the USSR were something they had never seen before at close quarters in their own countries, and they felt sure it was socialism which had created them.

Nor apparently were they aware that the crèches, maternity homes, kindergartens, and other social services so much boasted about in Russia were far more widespread and available to a larger proportion of the



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population in England, Germany, Austria and Scandinavia.

For the tourists I met in Moscow it was enough that new factories and power stations had been erected in Russia since the Revolution. They were not interested in the social cost or in the utility of these concrete signs of Soviet industrialization.

Yet for the Russian people the much-admired "gigantic successes on the industrial front" meant only hardship, undernourishment, and overwork. These great edifices did not minister to their wants, and never would.

The story of the peasant woman who saw a tractor for the first time, and exclaimed sadly and longingly, "What a lot of nails could have been made out of all that iron," illustrates the tragic farce of the Five Year Plan.

The people required food, clothing, shoes, and houses, and ordinary tools to make a living. They were given instead a stone, in the shape of a few great factories producing either goods for export to obtain money to import more machinery, or armaments to defend the Soviet state. Not to defend the people for they had literally "nothing to lose but their chains."

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One May Day, I marched in the procession in Moscow side by side with an Austrian Communist who had seen service with the Red Army in the civil wars as an aviator. Not yet having learned to hold my tongue on all occasions, I could not help remarking, as we passed the foundations of the Palace of Soviets, that it would have been better to have built flats for the workers first.

"Ah," he said, "don't you realize that this is an Asiatic people? In order to make them obey the government, palaces must be built to overawe them with concrete proof of the power and glory of the government. This is far more important for social stability than giving the people decent houses to live in."

Admirers of the Soviet Union point to the statistics of industrial growth—so much more iron and steel produced, so many more industrial workers, so huge an investment in capital construction. The cost is never reckoned, and no comparison can be made between the social cost under Stalin's so-called socialism and capitalism. We do know, however, that the cost of the construction carried out under the First Five Year Plan was very much higher than had been reckoned.

The tourists were incapable of judging whether the "Giants of the Five Year Plan"

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functioned to their full capacity or not. But everyone in Russia who had anything to do with industry or trade knew that jerry-building, poor materials, incompetent or skimped work, and hidden defects, made the factories and power stations erected at the cost of so much sweat and misery and hunger incapable of turning out more than a fraction of what they had been planned to produce.

The machines imported in exchange for the food and manufactured goods so sorely needed by the Russian people, or in return for the timber produced by wretched slave laborers of the secret police, deteriorated rapidly and soon became defective or unworkable. These defects and shortcomings were often referred to in the Soviet Press. But they were always ascribed to sabotage or to the ignorance or inefficiency of individuals, *never to the system which was in fact responsible.*

Yet it was the system to force engineers and technicians, all the qualified experts, to work under Communist Party bosses who knew nothing about the enterprises of which they were in charge, and could always put the blame on the non-Party specialists when things went wrong. However well or badly they worked, the result was the same:

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the concentration camp awaited the specialists in the short or the long run, so they tried to make the run as long as possible.

The best way to put off the evil day of arrest was to skimp work and allow others to skimp it, to close one's eyes to defects, to say that everything was going splendidly, and to flatter the Party boss who stood over you. Any specialist whose conscience drove him to the indiscretion of questioning or criticizing the orders of the ignorant Party chief was in for it.

The social cost of the "gigantic successes on the industrial front" cannot be calculated. For as early as 1930 the state Planning Commission was purged of the non-Party experts capable of computing it. Thereafter it was decreed that statistics must "play a practical part in the war of Communism against Capitalism"; that there must henceforth be only "class statistics."

This was an indirect way of saying that statistics henceforth should not be reliable, but should serve the needs of propaganda. Since that date, statistics which could not be manipulated to prove the successes of "socialist construction" have simply not been issued at all. Included are statistics dealing with prices, currency, housing, and the cost of living.

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The Soviet Government has discovered all sorts of ingenious ways to delude simple-minded tourist friends from England and the United States. When you visit a factory in Russia, it is usual in reply to questions to be given misleading statistics, the *planned* figure, not the real one.

In the course of my work at the Commissariat of Light Industry, I visited many textile factories. At Ivanovo Vosnysenk, I was handed a production report by the manager which I could not reconcile with what I had learned in the weaving rooms from the workers themselves, or with my experience at Promexport of what this factory had been able to send to us for export.

At last, after I had questioned the manager until he was weary, he exclaimed,

"Oh, I see now; you want the *factichiske* figures, not those *po planu*. All right, here they are."

The factual figures turned out to be about 35 per cent less than the theoretical planned statistics. Since I was a foreigner, he had naturally given me the planned figures, not the real ones, as that was the customary procedure with visitors.

Successes are usually claimed on the basis of figures stated in ruble values, not in units of production. The statistics of production

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as given in rubles are useless since prices are changeable and arbitrary. For instance, it may be stated that the production of shoes in a given year is to total 1,000 million rubles, as against 500 million in a previous year. But no one knows, and no one can compute, just how many pairs of shoes are made, or just what the value of the ruble is going to be, or what it was in the year used as a basis for comparison.

Again, if retail trade turnover figures in a certain year are much higher than in the previous year, this does not necessarily mean that more goods became available for the consumers. There may have been fewer units of goods, but the state may arbitrarily have increased its profits on such sales by raising the price.

When Stalin, after the conclusion of the First Five Year Plan, announced its realization as 93.7 per cent, and said this meant that industrial production was three times the pre-war figure, he implied that he was speaking of volume or quantity. In reality he was basing his calculation on arbitrary values translated into more or less fictitious rubles.

No one knows therefore what was in fact accomplished. In those branches of industry for which volume or quantity figures were

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published, production fell short of the Plan. This was notably the case with regard to iron, steel, and electricity.

Coal, which made a better showing, was fourteen per cent below the planned figure. Since the factories could have fulfilled their production plans only if provided with the necessary fuel and raw materials, it is obvious that the shortages in fuel, iron, and steel production involved the failure of other industries for which no figures except the ruble value of their output were ever published.

It was claimed that the metal and machine-building industries had greatly exceeded their planned figures of production. Either this was a plain lie, or the Plan never was a plan. An economy in which there was so little coordination between the parts that the *planned* production of iron and steel was vastly in excess of the planned production of the heavy industries as a whole, cannot be called a planned economy. Either there was no real plan or it failed.

Soviet statistics have become more and more incomplete and obscure in order to hide the failures. The "control figures" in the basic industries appear to have been slashed again and again in 1938 and 1939 to make it seem that the Plan was being ful-

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filled ninety per cent whereas in reality only about fifty per cent of the original planned figure had been produced. Since 1939 no official figures have been published.

Russia's vaunted planned economy has in fact almost ceased pretending to be anything of the kind. If year by year and quarter by quarter, the Plan is altered to fit in with the failure to execute it, and production in one branch of industry no longer bears anything but a haphazard relation to production in an allied branch, there cannot be said to be a Plan at all.

Each industry is producing just what it can regardless of the Plan, or its former capital investment, or its theoretical capacity. Soviet economy is more anarchic than a capitalist free enterprise economy.

The increased output of coal, iron, and steel prior to the war was won at a human cost which no country not ruled over by a ruthless and all-powerful despotism could contemplate. It is also doubtful whether the development of Russian heavy industry compensates, from the point of view of national strength, for the degradation of agriculture and the drastically reduced standard of living and morale of the working class which accompany it.

The official statistics do not reveal any-



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thing as to quality of production. In the textile industry, in which I worked, it was "normal" for eighty per cent of the cloth to be defective. It was, of course, sold. But we had the greatest difficulty in securing a sufficient quantity of undamaged goods for export.

Stalin's remedy for the disastrous results of the speed-up, undernourishment, and ignorance, was, of course drastic punishments. During the second Five Year Plan he ordered five years' imprisonment for bad workmanship.

The results of neglecting the human factor were most clearly demonstrated by inability to increase the output per worker. In spite of piece-work wages, threats, and paltry rewards, the undernourished, badly housed, and over-driven Soviet worker could not be forced to work harder. It was physically impossible for him to do so.

The output per worker was planned to be increased by 100 per cent during the First Five Year Plan. The result showed that it can have increased little, if at all, since the number of wage-earners, planned to increase from 11.3 million to 15.8 million actually went up to 22.8 million. In other words, seven million more workers were needed than had been estimated as neces-

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sary to produce the *full* planned figures of production.

The cost of the "gigantic successes on the industrial front"—the actual investment in industrialization during the First Five Year Plan—came to 120 milliard rubles instead of the 86 milliard planned.

The finances of the country got into such a chaotic state that the State Bank stopped publishing balance sheets. The people paid through inflation and a sharp rise in prices for the government's underestimate of the real cost of its planned investment, and for the terrific wastage entailed by the Soviet system.

The rise in prices in the four and a half years of the Plan gave the ruble only something like one-tenth of its previous value insofar as commercial prices were concerned. In view, however, of the rationing system and the special distributors, the ruble had all sorts of values depending on the social status of the purchaser.

Although the results of the tremendous investment of human misery in the development of Russian industry were so meager, there was at least something to show for all the sacrifice. In agriculture there was no progress at all, but a terrible decline. So disastrous and wasteful had the First Five

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Year Plan proved in the field of agriculture that even Stalin saw he must not try to repeat it. The ravages must be repaired; the wounds of society healed.

The Russian people, that sorry and starved nag which Stalin had harnessed to the heavy machine of "socialist construction," had to be allowed a little rest and a little nourishment if it were not to collapse altogether. No Plan at all was produced in 1933, and the Second Five Year Plan, when it came, provided for a more modest increase in production.

The famine continued and was even intensified through the terrible winter of 1932-33 and on into the spring. Then, as if Providence were taking pity on the most afflicted people on earth, the weather helped to produce the best harvest in years. It was still below the pre-war level, but the numbers who died of starvation decreased. In Socialist Russia one accounted it as wonderful happiness if there was nearly enough bread for everyone.

Until 1935 cost accounting was at a discount in the Soviet Union. Everything was being done by threats and force. Since the general scarcity of food and manufactured products for all but the families of the Communist Party bureaucracy was so great that

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money had almost lost its function as a measure of value, the money cost of construction was regarded as of minor importance. It was assumed that as long as the construction plans were realized, nothing else mattered, so inflation was rapid and unchecked.

The individual citizen was also affected. Money seemed to us comparatively unimportant. Privilege or priority was what mattered. To this day I have remained affected by the years in Moscow when I purchased anything available almost regardless of the cost. Money was comparatively easy to come by. Goods were more precious than paper rubles.

Finally the government recognized that some stability must be given to the ruble if rationing were ever to be abolished. From 1935 on, the Bolshevik leaders started to demand cost accounting in all enterprises, and to stress the importance of the bookkeeper. The wretched accountants who had belonged to the lowest social strata suddenly found themselves elevated to almost as high a rank as the engineers.

However, the dearth of skilled accountants, the fact that they were almost always non-Party men, and their subordination to Communist Party chiefs whose main concern was to make a good showing, rendered

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the keeping of accounts in Soviet enterprises too often the work of clever swindlers rather than of experts.

Ordjonikidze, Commissar of Heavy Industry, railed against the managers who "kicked out their bookkeepers because they conscientiously did their jobs"; but few dared to go against the orders of the Communist Party boss on whom their living depended.

Nevertheless the keeping of accounts has at least done something to restrain the anarchy of Soviet economy, even if the figures are often "cooked." Unfortunately the Soviet Government, unwilling to let its own people or the outside world know how far performance falls short of the Plan, has published fewer and fewer statistics since 1935, and ceased publishing them altogether during and since the war.

Soviet propagandists have sought to throw dust in the eyes of the world by their boasts as to the size of the new factories and power stations. The planners of the Western world have faithfully mimicked them. It came to be argued that if socialist construction in the USSR had produced something larger than anything in the capitalist world, then of necessity socialism was superior to capitalism.

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It was perhaps unconsciously felt that since the United States, the most advanced capitalist country, had the tallest buildings in the world, if Russia could produce the *biggest* industrial enterprises she would somehow have proved herself superior. This Asiatic conception of progress and grandeur has been accepted and adopted by many American admirers of the Soviet Union.

In a backward country such as Russia, only the enslavement of the people could make possible the rapid erection of gigantic power stations, canals, roads, and factories without credits from industrially advanced countries. The Pyramids could not have been built except by slave labor, and the same is true of the Russian "Giants of the Five Year Plan."

Some American liberals go so far as to excuse even the slavery practiced in Russia, such is their worship of the machine and of planning. But for the most part, the admirers of the Soviet Union stubbornly maintain, in face of all the evidence to the contrary, that the industrialization of the Soviet Union has been carried out at the same time as an *improvement* in working-class conditions.

Of course, the nearer a country's basic

living level is to zero, the more imposing can its progress be made to appear if reckoned in percentages.

Up to 1932 the Soviet Government still could count upon the enthusiastic labor of a section of the workers. But after 1932 nearly everyone lost faith. Exhausted and dissatisfied, the Russian workers are anxious to secure a soft job instead of working hard. Moreover, two factors militate against any possibility of repeating the effort of 1928 to 1932. Too many engineers, technicians, administrators, specialists of all kinds, have been killed in the purges or are now human wrecks in NKVD slave labor camps.

The qualified personnel inherited from the Tsarist regime has been willfully destroyed by Stalin, and the new Soviet intelligentsia has not the knowledge, experience, or devotion to its work of the old bourgeois specialists. Nor is there any longer any class left possessing tangible wealth which can be seized to pay for new imports of machinery.

All the gold in private possession came into the hands of the Russian Government long ago either through *Torgsin* or extorted by the tortures of the secret police. Except for their privately owned livestock, there is no longer anything left of which the peas-

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ants can be expropriated. The standard of life of the workers cannot be reduced further.

In a word, the Soviet Government had exhausted all Russia's fat, before the country was devastated by Nazi Germany. The Kremlin must now rely on increased production or foreign conquest to provide for necessary imports. Increased production is precisely what cannot be achieved under the Soviet system, which helps to explain Russia's growing appetite for looting foreign countries.

After 1937, industrial production slipped backward. The purge of 1936-39 had the inevitable result of disorganizing the national economy. How could enterprises function according to any kind of plan when managers, accountants and clerks were being arrested by the thousands and herded off as prisoners to cut timber or slave in the mines under the NKVD guards?

Those who escaped arrest were too frightened and demoralized to work efficiently. The decline in production was cumulative, since the less consumption goods were produced the less incentive the workers had to try to increase their earnings.

Above all, the *Stakhanov* system—the tremendous speeding up without regard to its



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effect on men or machinery—had the unavoidable result of decreasing production from year to year as more and more machinery broke down.

Despite all the disillusionment, the idea persists in Western countries that Russia is a "socialist state," still sanctified even if she has sinned. The pathetic belief in Russia of the die-hard Stalinists is based on their obsession with the socialist formula. They argue that since there is state ownership of the means of production and distribution, there can be no exploiters in the Soviet Union and the condition of the working class must have improved.

The claims of a planned economy are as much of a pretense as that collectivism has improved the condition of the masses. Obviously, if one branch of industry, or even certain factories within one branch, overfulfills its plan, it must have procured a larger amount of raw materials than it was entitled to under the plan and so made its record at the expense of some other industry. If, on the other hand, another industry has failed to fulfill the Plan, it will have precluded fulfillment of the Plan by an industry dependent upon it for raw materials.

Soviet statisticians endeavor to convince the world that the production plans have

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been fulfilled by discounting failures on one front by successes on another.

But any economist knows this cannot be done. To take the simplest example, if the iron-ore production plan has been exceeded, and the coal production plan has failed, a lesser amount of steel is necessarily produced. Nor can the Plan for consumers' goods production be said to have been fulfilled if the planned figure for perfumery production has been exceeded and that for textiles fallen far short.

The Third Five Year Plan was not announced until 1939, and even then full details were not given as had been done for the previous plans. Obviously conditions were not such as to make it desirable for the government to publish statistics which would either reveal the decline in production or make it appear that little increase was contemplated in the production figures.

Today, however, the Soviet government can ascribe all its failures to the German invasion. Those who never knew Russia before 1941 are easily convinced that the misery, starvation and lack of the necessities of life are all due to the war. The few of us who lived in Russia earlier know that even in the best years preceding the Nazi attack the standard of life of the mass of the Russian people was lower than under the Tsars.

## XV

### *The High Cost of Communism*

THE COST of financing the much boasted industrialization of the USSR has been borne principally by the peasants, and in general is based on an enormous tax on food and a very large tax on all manufactured goods sold to the consumers.

The Soviet Government collects from the peasants, in one form or another, nearly half of the produce of their labor on the collective farms, at a price which bears no relation at all to the cost of production. It sells this produce to the consumers at a profit of several hundred per cent. In this way it obtains, as the monopoly purchaser, not only the food to keep the urban workers alive, but also raw materials for industry, such as cotton, flax, wool, and hides, at similar arbitrary prices.

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The Soviet state sells manufactured goods for mass consumption at a price which averages double what it costs to produce them. Insofar as manufactured goods are concerned, the state exploits the consumer rather than the producer.

But since producers and consumers are in the main the same people, it is really immaterial whether we say that the workers' wages represent only a tiny fraction of the value (selling price) of the goods they produce, or whether we say that the state takes advantage of its monopoly position to force the workers to pay double the worth of the goods they consume.

The state's enormous profit on the goods it sells is taken in the form of a turnover tax—that is, a sales tax rather than a trading profit. In other words, the state's profit is not collected at the factory as employer's profit, nor at the state stores as a trader's profit, but is collected in the form of a tax, which is paid in the end by the purchaser.

In this way losses on capital goods are made up out of the profits on consumers' goods. Both the cost of industrialization and the losses due to the inefficiency of the greater part of heavy industry are paid for by the peasants as producers and consumers

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and by the workers and employees as consumers.

Put in Marxist terminology, the surplus value created by the labor of the peasants and workers is appropriated by the state, which uses it as the government decrees. Since the people have no voice in the government, Soviet economy is a perfect example of state capitalism.

The turnover tax has constituted the government's largest source of income. In 1939 it provided 70 per cent of the total state budgetary revenue. Of this total, the tax on bread and other foods usually constitutes more than two-thirds. The turnover tax on manufactured goods varies according to the nature of the articles.

Usually it is highest on goods of mass consumption and lowest on luxury goods not purchased at all by the mass of the people. In general the tax is levied at a rate sufficiently high to prevent demand from out-running the supply of any particular article. But since there is always a shortage of the goods of mass consumption, long lines of customers along the street leading to the shop doors have remained a permanent feature of Soviet life.

When the output of light industry falls

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far short of the plan, as frequently occurs, or when the cost of construction of new enterprises is higher than the estimate, as almost always happens, the turnover tax is increased to ensure necessary government revenue.

The newspaper *Finansoya Gazetta* of January 10, 1940, gave the actual yield of the turnover tax in 1939 as 96.5 billion rubles as compared with 80.4 billion rubles in 1938. This increase of 16 billion rubles is the largest advance recorded over the preceding five years, and it coincided with an increased scarcity of consumers' goods. Since the scarcity of manufactured goods on sale in 1939 was more marked than in any year since 1935, it is obvious that the increased revenue from the turnover tax was due to inflation.

What socialism has come to mean for the Russian people is illustrated by a story told in Moscow. A Communist Party propagandist goes to a village and gives the assembled peasants a glowing account of the wonders of construction of socialism. After he has spoken, one of the old peasants gets up and says:

"Yes, comrade, it sounds wonderful, but look at our clothing—nothing but rags to

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wear and nothing to be bought in the village shop."

The Communist answers him angrily and scornfully: "You making all that fuss about clothes! Why, in places like Africa and the South Seas people have no clothing at all."

The peasant scratches his head and then says thoughtfully: "I suppose they've had socialism for a long time there."

It is, of course, absurd to suppose that the Russian people, workers, employers, or peasants, really desire to go on living on the barest level of subsistence under repeated promises that it is for the benefit of future generations. Only force can compel them to do so.

If Soviet democracy were a reality, the planners would provide for a rapid increase in the production of consumers' goods. Such an increase would probably lead to a more rapid development of heavy industry and light industry than has been accomplished by Stalin's forced depreciation of the general standard of living to squeeze out capital for industrialization.

No people can work efficiently on the meager diet of the Russian worker, living as he does in crowded tenements and forced to spend much of his "leisure" standing in

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line to secure food, clothing and other necessities, or attending long, dreary meetings where the sorry farce of pretending that "life is joyous" has to be played over and over again. The psychological strain of pretending that they are happy, and of always saying the opposite of what they think, and the constant fear of arrest contribute to impairing the efficiency of the Russian workers.

Slave labor long ago was recognized as unprofitable. Serfdom in most of Europe gave way to private ownership and free enterprise because the latter were more productive. These economic truths have been proved once again in Soviet Russia.

The official Soviet figures of Russia's total grain production bear witness to the fact that the land yields no more, if as much, as in Tsarist times. It would, of course, be unfair to judge by Russia's food production since the war.

Germany's devastation of White Russia and the Ukraine has produced famine conditions for which the Soviet Government is not responsible. But in the years immediately preceding the Second World War the total grain yield was only a little above the pre-Revolutionary level in spite of all the capital invested in agriculture in the shape



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of tractors and other modern farm machinery.

The total, in millions of tons, for the three years 1936-1938 averaged 99.3, as against 94.1 in 1913. As regards meat and dairy produce it is well known that Russia has never recovered from the slaughter of livestock during the battle of collectivization.

Thus the blood, sweat and tears of the expropriated peasant population have produced nothing but a barren claim on the part of their rulers to have socialized the agrarian economy.

Since the peasants have to support a small army of managers, controllers, accountants, tractor driver mechanics and secret police, the overhead cost of producing food is undoubtedly higher than in Tsarist times when only the landowners and usurers lived off the peasants' labor.

Toward the end of the period I lived in Soviet Russia the government claimed that the incomes of the peasants had trebled since 1913, but no mention was made of the ten- to twenty-fold increase in the price of clothes, boots and other manufactured goods the peasant needs to buy.

If the Soviet Government were not forced by its own policy to maintain millions of soldiers, militia, armed guards, and NKVD

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spies to keep the people in subjection, it would have far greater resources for industrializing the country.

There is little doubt that the percentage of population employed by the Russian Government to coerce and terrorize the peasants and workers is a good deal larger than the "capitalist class" in most other countries.

If one also takes into account the huge Soviet bureaucracy, it is obvious that under Stalin's collectivism the actual producers of the country's wealth have to support a larger number of persons performing no productive labor than is the case under the capitalist system.

The Friends of the Soviet Union, in the United States and England, when driven into a corner, will still fight on with the statement that unemployment has been abolished in the USSR. But even if the Soviet Government's contention were true, which it is not, the same could have been said of Nazi Germany.

If the state has the power to compel men to labor for the barest subsistence on the production of armaments and military fortifications, or if, as in Soviet Russia, it herds millions into concentration camps where they labor as slaves in building roads, canals, and railways, or in cutting timber and

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working in mines in the Arctic, unemployment can, of course, be liquidated.

Undeveloped countries under the capitalist system, such as the United States during most of the nineteenth century, and also Canada and Australia, did not suffer from unemployment.

The enslaved negroes of Africa, forced to labor under European masters on the plantations, are never unemployed. If this is all the Soviet-loving liberals of Western Europe and America care about, they ought also to admire the Nazi system, and the methods of exploiting colored races adopted by imperialist powers.

The simple means adopted by the Soviet Government to cure unemployment during the First Five Year Plan was physical liquidation of the unemployed and the underemployed, or their conversion into convicts doing forced labor in the Arctic timber camps and constructing roads, railways, and canals. Any "capitalist" government able and willing to herd all the millions of unemployed into slave gangs, constructing public works or palaces for the ruling class, herded into barracks at night, and fed worse than pigs, would have little difficulty in solving the unemployment problem.

It is to be surmised that the crisis in Rus-

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sia's national economy, which had been growing in intensity from 1936 to 1939, was the basic cause for the Russo-German Pact. In the first place, Stalin knew that the Red Army, if put to the test of a one-front war against Germany would crumple up before the German Army, and that neither Soviet transport nor industry could supply the army for any length of time.

Secondly, it was essential for the USSR to import new machinery and enlist the aid of foreign technicians. Since it was impossible to pay out cash or goods for this assistance, Germany was the only country with whom barter credits could be arranged on a big scale. By 1939 German economic and technical aid had become essential to the survival of the Stalinist regime. Following 1941 American Lend Lease saved Soviet Russia.

Soviet aggression can in part be explained as due to the failure to increase the productivity of the country, and to the meager returns from the large capital investments in industry. Looking for new sources of capital accumulation, and hoping to reinvigorate the decaying Soviet state by the tonic of national aggrandizement, conquest and glory, the Soviet Government in 1939 secured temporary new sources of revenue through the

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expropriation of the property of conquered Poles and Finns. After Germany's defeat it followed the same path.

Stalin's socialist government having started by enslaving the Russian peasants and workers, must continue to enslave other peoples in order to survive.

## XVI

### *Red Tsar*

ONCE WE HAD SETTLED down to life in Russia, and the shock of discovering the harsh reality behind the communist façade had worn off, we tried to determine the real nature of the society in which we lived.

It seemed to us that Soviet economy had become the most perfect example of state capitalism in existence, since the state exploits (takes profit from the labor of) all the people. But this was only part of the picture. Since in Russia the people do not participate in the government and have no control over it, the new society combines the methods of government of an oriental despotism with the worst features of capitalism.

The Russian workers, like the peasants,

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have no say at all as regards the disposal of the wealth created by their labor. The Communist Party, although not in theory the "owner" of the means of production, appropriates to itself or for its own purposes the profit and benefits derived from the labor of the rest of the population. One can call the system state capitalism with the Bolshevik Party drawing the dividends.

If a group of capitalists in the United States were able to acquire control of all land and productive capital, to abolish representative government, and to draw their dividends not as individual owners but as a ruling and managerial clique, the result would be in essence the same economic and political system as that of Soviet Russia.

It would, of course, in the United States be a far more efficiently run operation, and it is unlikely that large numbers of people would starve, as they do in Russia. But basically it would be the same type of state capitalism.

The fact that the ruling group in the USSR is composed of men who did not start life as capitalists makes no vital difference. It means that they are far more incompetent, but it does not mean that they are not exploiters. Collective exploitation is no more

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moral than individual exploitation nor is it any more bearable for those who are exploited.

It is an extraordinary proof of mankind's inability to see realities behind façades, and its incorrigible propensity to examine the label on the bottle instead of the contents, that so many of our American liberals and socialists fail to realize the true nature of the Soviet state. They think that because there are no capitalists in the USSR there cannot be any exploiting class, and that therefore of necessity Russia is a socialist state according to the original conception of the word socialism.

There is in the Soviet Union a new society, a society in which the method of exploitation is new. Instead of the worker and peasant being exploited by a capitalist or a landowner, he is exploited by the state. The state appropriates the produce of all men's labor beyond what is required to keep them alive at the lowest level of subsistence. Since the Communist Party has a monopoly of political power it owns the state. There is therefore collective exploitation by a group.

The profits derived from the labors of the Russian people are disposed of as the Communist ruling class decrees. After allocating to itself the income it sees fit, it uses the re-



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maintaining profits for the maintenance of the Army and the secret police and for new investments in productive enterprise.

The number of functionaries in Russia has been computed by Stalin as eight millions. Some of these millions—the engineers, technicians, accountants, qualified administrators, clerks and typists—are performing labor as socially necessary as the workers and peasants.

Others are engaged in such labors as praising Stalin and other advertising and public relations activities. A large but unknown number are engaged in spying on the productive workers, technicians and managers, in subjecting them to mental or physical tortures, and in guarding the slave workers.

Another function of the parasitic Communist Party members is to occupy positions as commissars or as chairmen and directors of the state office organizations, or as directors or managers of factories, in which capacity they interfere with and ruin the work of the non-Party specialists. They further perform the "labor" of driving others to work. In Russia there is a stock joke about being "a responsible worker" as signifying the man who stands by and looks on while others labor.

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Of course, if you are a mystic, you might say that Stalin is the Supreme Father, or a kind of proletarian Russian Mikado who in some mysterious way unites in himself the souls of all his people and leads them by divine inspiration, in a spirit of true democracy. You may believe that, in sacrificing both material well-being and liberty to Stalin, the people are sacrificing to themselves, since he is their god in their own image.

This deification is Stalin's own conception of himself, as he testified at his sixtieth birthday:

"Your congratulations and greetings I credit to the account of the great party of the working class, which gave me birth and raised me in its own image."

The semi-mystical, semi-religious and altogether nauseating outpourings in the Soviet Press in praise of Stalin assign to him such a universality. He is represented as the fountain of all goodness and all strength and of all achievement of the whole Russian people.

Stalin is the divine *Vozd* (The Russian translation of Führer, or leader.) He is the nation as a totality, the "image" of themselves set up by the working class. By prais-

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ing him, the working class is supposed to adore itself.

Stalin is the "infallible," the "incomparable," "our sun" and "our soul." He is the proletariat's—or the Russian's—god "created in its own image." He is the Red Tsar, and "Little Father" of his people.

The Soviet apologist who is not satisfied with the mystical explanation for the deprivation of guarantees of human rights to the workers and for their oppression by the state, will argue that since the profit obtained from the labor of worker and peasant is invested in capital construction for the future benefit of "all the toilers," they have nothing to complain of.

This argument ignores several pertinent facts. In the first place, the profit is often wasted in new enterprises which are so badly run that they fail to pay the social cost of their construction before the machinery wears out.

In the second place, much of the profit goes to supply a comparatively luxurious life for Communist Party leaders, the Red Army officers, the police and the bureaucracy, instead of to raise the general standard of life. Thirdly, more and more of the national income has of recent years gone to

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support the armed forces and secret police which keep the workers and peasants in subjection.

Whereas those who are moved by the humanitarian and libertarian hopes formerly held out by socialists have already turned their backs on Stalin's Russia, there remain many people whose sole interest in socialism is in seeing an "orderly and planned" economy take the place of "capitalist anarchy," and who accept paper plans instead of the evidence of their eyes when they visit the USSR.

These visitors are not in the least interested in the emancipation of mankind. They think that "planning" justifies all, excuses all, and they desire to see everyone put to school and subjected to strict discipline for their own good.

People of this type of mind look upon the Russian masses as so many guinea pigs in a laboratory, subjects for a "great social experiment" which is going on too far away to menace the comfortable security of enlightened Western intellectuals.

It was only when Stalin, in 1939, began to inflict on other peoples the treatment which he had hitherto only been able to impose upon his own, that many of the admirers of the USSR began to recoil. Yet, as Max

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Eastman has expressed it, the bombing of Finland in 1939 was a polite and civilized gesture compared to Stalin's domestic policies.

The reality of Stalin's Russia is in fact so horrible that most people, even in this age of conditioning to horror, refuse to believe that such things can be. The truth is dismissed as an atrocity story; and so anxious are men to believe in the existence of the socialist heaven that they accept the crudest Communist propaganda as gospel truth. Those who have accepted Russian Communism as a religious faith, and whose reasoning powers have become atrophied, will no doubt continue to worship their bloody idol and to glorify the human sacrifices made to it.

But it is still possible that those whose adherence to Stalinism is due to ignorance of what the Soviet Union is really like, and to the generous impulses which impel men and women to struggle for a better social order, will realize in time that slavery is slavery, even if coated o'er with a thin cast of Marxist dogma.

Such writers as Sidney and Beatrice Webb did untold harm to the liberal and progressive movement of Western Europe. No Nazi or Communist Fifth Columnist could do so

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much to undermine democracy as *Soviet Russia, A New Civilization*, the book which stamped Soviet Russia with the approval of two of the best known liberal sociologists in the Western World.

With the immense prestige of their long life of service in the British labor movement, and of their published works of careful historical research, these elderly British socialists who had founded the Fabian Society in their youth, led the procession of socialists and liberals into the abyss of totalitarianism.

The conception of socialism as a juster, better social order, which was once a beacon to those who desired human freedom, has become a blood-red light of warning. Socialism has been degraded to the level of the beasts, become synonymous with injustice, cruelty, oppression, and misery.

Liberalism has been corrupted, deprived of meaning. Anyone whose human sympathies and intelligence are not atrophied must exclaim: "If Stalin's Russia is what these socialists and liberals want, give me the most reactionary capitalism!"

The Webbs and their disciples and colleagues in England and America made the Soviet Union not only respectable, but admirable. With their Fabian mantle they hid

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the horrors, the starvation, the misery, the degradation of the human spirit and the barbarous methods of government of Stalin's Russia.

Not only this, their support emboldened Stalin to throw aside all restraint. If the Webbs could swallow the purges and the terror, the whole Western socialist and radical movement could be made to swallow atrocities.

Prior to the Russo-German Pact, Stalin was courting the democracies, and had it not been for the chorus of praise which went up from the Western liberals, he might not have dared to execute untold thousands and condemn millions to slave labor without trial. By shutting their eyes to the atrocities committed by the Stalin regime, or sealing their lips, many so-called liberals made themselves accomplices to these crimes.

No recent phenomena have been more sickening to the soul than the cold-blooded disregard of the lives of millions displayed by a multitude of deluded liberals in Western Europe and the United States.

Liberal journals refused to publish condemnations of the Moscow trials, lied to their readers, put new meanings on old words. They redefined liberty to mean subordination; they justified executions, tor-

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tures, imprisonment of innocent men and women, even the shooting of children for theft, because it was done in the name of "planned economy." Sadism became a virtue if it was socialistically administered sadism.

Consciously or unconsciously, they subscribed in their writings to the Soviet newspapers' concept that "information does not consist in the dissemination of news, but in the education of the masses." "Information is an instrument in the class struggle; not a mirror to reflect events objectively." To lie was to protect the socialist fatherland; to tell the truth was to be a reactionary or worse.

The primary question is precisely the one which the Webbs completely ignored: Who owns the state? Their twaddle about the "vocation of leadership"—a euphemism for Communist tyranny—proves only their perversion of history and of psychology, and their willful blindness to the constraints which keep the Russian people subservient to totalitarian tyranny.

Not only were the Webbs naïve, they also made many statements which are positively untrue, as, for instance, when they wrote that "to this day the rulers of the USSR receive only the equivalent of the earnings



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of the most highly skilled and zealous craftsmen."

The party maximum which in Lenin's day was a reality, had long ceased to be anything but the thinnest of pretenses when the Webbs visited Soviet Russia. All it meant was that the greater part of the income of the rulers was paid in kind.

Since 1935 the profits taken from the productive labor of the Russian people by the Bolshevik party have not been hidden, and have also steadily increased in volume. But long before 1935 the style of living of the Communist Party bureaucracy, as compared to that of the workers and specialists, revealed how large a dividend it was drawing from its investment in Stalin's counter-revolution.

Since the abolition of the closed distributors in 1935, the salaries of high officials have been anything from ten to thirty times as high as the wage of a worker of average qualifications.

When I left the Soviet Union in the summer of 1936, chairmen of large enterprises were paid salaries of 2,000 to 3,000 rubles a month. Although no one knew for certain the amounts being paid to Commissars and others holding the highest positions in the

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state, it was generally believed in Moscow that they were receiving 7,000 or more.

The Soviet Government never publishes figures showing the salaries of such high functionaries as Molotov and Vishinsky nor does it reveal the distribution of the national income. Such statistics would make it too glaringly obvious to the outside world that Russia is as far from being a classless society of the equal as it is of the free.

Our friends the Rabinovitches, who ranked as just below the top Party bureaucrats, had a large modern flat, a big *datcha*, and a private automobile all paid for by the Commissariat of Foreign Trade for which Philip Rabinovitch worked. One of their two servants was also paid for by the Commissariat, and Philip received a handsome entertainment allowance over and above his salary. The Rabinovitches were higher in the Communist social scale than anyone else we knew, but their standard of life was far below that of others we heard of.

The luxurious life lived by the Soviet aristocracy, which the ordinary citizen glimpses only from afar, and which is a direct violation of Lenin's injunction that the Party member should receive salaries no higher than a worker's wage, is one of the most striking features of Stalin's Russia.

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A little of the puritanical and self-sacrificing spirit which had originally permeated the Bolshevik Party still survived when I first went to live in Russia. All restraints were openly discarded when Stalin told his henchmen to "live joyously," obviously seeking thus to buy the loyalty of the Party members.

Since 1935 the expectation of life of a Communist Party member has not been long. Any moment he may lose Stalin's favor, or be ruined by accusations leveled at him by men on the next rung of the ladder seeking to supplant him.

But while the going lasts it is exceedingly good, and since the poorest worker is as liable to be arrested as the high and mighty Party boss, the latter may well consider it worth while to gather as many rosebuds as he may, and as quickly as possible.

At least when he comes to face the firing squad in the cellars of the Lubianka Prison, or finds himself a slave laborer in a concentration camp, he will have the satisfaction denied to the workers and peasants of knowing that he has enjoyed a good time for a few years.

## XVII

### *Scapegoats*

IN THE YEARS I worked at Promexport and in the Commissariat of Light Industry, I was continually amazed at the number of specialists who, in spite of every discrimination against them and the overwhelming difficulties of their work, continued loyally and conscientiously to carry out their duties.

It was the non-Party specialists who had ensured the reconstruction of industry and transport after the breakdown of the Bolshevik Revolution. Even now, when they went in constant fear of arrest, most of them continued to devote their brains and energies to their work.

Their material rewards grew smaller and smaller. They worked twelve to fourteen hours a day to overcome the muddles cre-

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ated by their superiors, the Communist Party bosses, and whenever there was a serious failure they were blamed for it and accused of being "wreckers."

The tragedy of these people was that in the very effort to work conscientiously and honestly they endangered their existence. Specialists who perceived that a plan could not be carried out without wrecking machinery or fatally depreciating it, were accused of sabotage and of being counter-revolutionaries preventing the construction of socialism.

Statisticians who made careful estimates based on an intelligent survey of materials available or production capacities were flung into concentration camps.

For instance the Gosplan specialists who drew up the original Five Year Plan were shot for sabotage. Yet in 1932 it was found that the actual achievements under the Plan came to just about the figures of increased production which the executed men had estimated could be achieved.

I knew an engineer in Moscow who was a friend of Arcadi's, who had been in and out of prison three times. He was by then quite philosophical about it. He was highly qualified, and between imprisonments he received a good salary and lived well. He was

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conditioned to injustice and had no hope for the future. His wife always had a suitcase packed ready for the moment when the secret police should once again knock at the door and take him away.

This man's position was better than that of many, for his qualifications were so special that he told us he felt pretty confident he would never be shot, however often he was made into a scapegoat and arrested. Even during the periods he was an unwilling guest of the OGPU he was comparatively well treated.

I remember a young agronomist, a distant relative of my husband's, who came to visit us in Moscow one evening. He was faced, he said sadly, with the choice of either going to prison that year for drawing up a plan for beet production which could be fulfilled, or of going to prison later for drawing up one which would satisfy the Party authorities, but could not possibly be fulfilled.

In agriculture as in industry, Stalin demanded impossible plans which either could not be met, or which would cause terrible distress if carried out. Then he persecuted both those who said the Plans were impossible of achievement and those who of necessity failed to carry them through.

The position of the non-Party specialists

was particularly difficult in that they were everywhere working under the orders of a Communist who knew nothing and need learn little about the enterprise he controlled. His retention of the post and of the privileges which went with it depended not on knowledge, conscientiousness, or administrative capacity, but upon his being politically reliable; in other words, upon his being a Stalin yes-man and a good slave-driver.

When things went wrong the communist manager or director could always lay the blame upon the non-Party specialists who worked under him, accusing the latter of being wreckers and counter-revolutionaries.

Although the shadow of the concentration camps hung over everyone I worked with, they rarely if ever spoke of it. Expression of your fears might bring about the very thing you dreaded.

The very few people who managed to survive a term of forced labor under the secret police and returned to Moscow dared not speak openly of their experiences lest they be sent back to the living death they had been released from.

One evening my husband brought home with him a friend of his youth whom he had by chance encountered. This man, whose name I will not mention since it is possible

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he still lives, had been in prison both under the Tsar and under Stalin.

Arcadi came to me in the kitchen to warn me not to ask him questions.

"None of your English frankness, darling," he said. "He has probably been warned not to talk as the price of his liberty. Let him talk if he will, but don't ask questions."

Our visitor gave us no details, but one remark was as revealing as any description of his suffering or that of others could have been. He said,

"We ought to have thanked God for the mercy of the Tsar."

Year by year the slave labor camps became a more integral part of the Soviet system. They had been begun as places of punishment and of warning. Fear of being delivered into the cruel hands of the secret police drove the workers to accept regimentation, the deprivation of the last vestiges of trade-union rights, and the speed-up.

Gradually, however, the secret police, by sweeping millions of victims into its camps, came to exercise a dominant role in the economic life of Russia. By the time its name had been changed to NKVD, the secret police owned factories and farms as well as being in charge of the timber camps, canal



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construction, road and railway building and other public works.

The number of slave laborers in Russia today is known to be larger than ever before, but it was already calculated to be about ten million when I lived in Moscow. The Soviet brand of "democracy" averages two to three political prisoners for every enrolled Communist Party member in Russia. The Soviet economy could no longer function without slave labor.

To retain its labor force the NKVD practiced cruel jokes upon the prisoners who had lived through their term of purgatory. For instance it was announced in the Russian press that the prisoners liberated on completion of the White Sea-Baltic Canal "had become so fond of working collectively," that they were being "allowed" to take part in another great construction project, the Moscow-Volga Canal.

New categories of victims were sought periodically to replenish the NKVD's forced labor battalions, continually depleted by the high death rate among the overworked half-starved slaves.

One day I found an American friend, Milly Mitchell, in tears in her hotel room. The secret police had taken her Russian husband, an actor, accusing him of the crime

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of homosexuality in an earlier period of his life.

Russian friends regarded me as naïve when I asked why such and such a person had been arrested and shrugged their shoulders. Arrest was regarded like death; the reaper who might strike anywhere.

What was regarded as a funny story in the grim atmosphere of our lives was told me by our friend Erbesfeld who had worked for a time at Archangel. One day in the *Stolovaya* of the Timber Trust some bad mutton had been served. An employee called Boris had joked about it saying, "Stalin loves mutton but he wouldn't eat this."

Next day Boris did not come to work. His disappearance was at once ascribed to his having used Stalin's name in jest. It seemed quite natural to his comrades that he should have been arrested.

What had actually happened to Boris was little less fantastic. He had in fact been summoned to the secret police offices. While waiting in the courtyard a gang of ex-Kulak slave laborers was driven in after a long march. When they were rounded up to proceed to their place of work, Boris was pushed in with them. He protested that he was not one of the gang, but a soldier prod-

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ded him with a bayonet and forced him to march.

Meanwhile the OGPU was hunting for Boris, and decided he must have run away. They instituted a search for him and finally after six weeks discovered he was in one of their own slave camps. The story had a happy ending for Boris was released. The secret police had called him for questioning on a matter which did not concern him personally. The mutton had nothing to do with it.

The only way in which the specialists could save their lives and liberty was to make themselves indispensable to their Party bosses, either by helping them to "cook accounts," put on false fronts, and in general make it appear that the enterprise was fulfilling the Plan, or even overfulfilling it, when in reality production was defective, machinery deteriorating, and insufficient quantities of goods being produced. The best way to make a good showing and earn praise and rewards was to produce as large an amount as possible without paying any attention to quality.

The great art in Soviet Russia, as practiced in particular by clever and not too scrupulous specialists in the service of their

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Party masters, was *blat*, a word difficult to translate but meaning wangling, camouflage, favors done for favors received, the working out of personal combinations which make it possible to get around the obstacles created by the Plan which is no plan.

In every enterprise the *blatmeister* is more indispensable than the expert. It is he who can convince visiting commissions and the NKVD that all is going according to plan, when in reality everything is in a mess. It is he who can obtain the materials necessary for fulfilling the quota, but unobtainable through normal channels.

By providing the head of another enterprise with what he lacks, or by connections in high places, the *blatmeister* is able to secure materials to fulfill or overfulfill the Plan. The quotas having been drawn up without regard to real possibilities, and industry being continually disorganized by attempting overfulfillment of the Plan by those seeking honors and advancements, there are never enough materials for the fulfillment of the plans of all the enterprises. So only those who do not rely on the official channels for securing supplies can hope to obtain enough materials to fulfill their quota.

Suppose, for instance, that I am the head of a rubber goods factory which badly needs

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some chemical to continue manufacturing overshoes. The supply of this chemical is limited, so that I am unlikely to be able to obtain a sufficient quantity of it to fulfill my plan if I rely upon an official application in the normal way.

My *blatmeister*, however, finds out that one of the departmental chiefs of the Chemical Trust, Comrade Gromyko, wants some building materials to finish his new summer residence outside the city. Though I have no such materials at my disposal, the director of the Building Cooperative of the Rosa Luxemburg Machine Tool factory has.

By furnishing the latter with a supply of galoshes for his factory workers, I obtain the building materials for Comrade Gromyko, and the latter in return supplies me with my chemical. Thus—not according to the plan—do Soviet industry and trade function after a fashion.

One of the best *blatmeisters* I ever met was a certain Manevitch at Promexport, who was a genius not only at working out combinations to secure delivery of our goods but also at presenting figures in such a way as to make it appear that our quota had been more than fulfilled.

He was so useful to the chairman of our organization that the latter—an old Party

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member—managed to wangle him into the Party. This was no mean feat, for at that time the proverbial camel had about as much chance of passing through the needle's eye as most intellectuals of entering the Communist Party. Manevitch was promoted to be vice-chairman, but eventually was arrested when an investigation revealed Prom-export's exaggeration of our achievements. The chairman, of course, abandoned him to his fate.

But even the OGPU recognized Manevitch's usefulness, and he was soon put in charge of a section of the construction work on the Volga-Moscow canal. Another *blatmeister* at our office, the head of the transport section, was invaluable at securing railway freight cars for our goods at the expense of other factories. But he was too obviously cynical and too frequently drunk to join the Party, and eventually got himself arrested for trying to supply a hospital, which badly needed sheets, with some from our export stock. Both Manevitch and the transport chief were decent fellows, not informers but wangers. It was the conditions of work in the Soviet Union which drove them to turn their talents to *blatmeistering*.

A far more unpleasant type of *blatmeister* was the titular head of one department at

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Promexport, who acted as general factotum and toady to Kalmanofsky, the chairman under whom I worked. He attended to the letting of the chairman's *datcha* and to other personal affairs. He was always at Kalmanofsky's side, fetched and carried for him, flattered him, and made himself useful in innumerable ways.

Quite useless at his office job, this *blatmeister* was invaluable to the chairman for securing whatever he personally required and in general in attending to his private affairs. He had no dignity at all. The chairman often treated him like a dog, stormed at him and vented his temper on him.

Kalmanofsky was not stupid. He was in fact an able and intelligent man, an educated Jew who could appreciate merit and liked men like my husband who stood their ground and were never subservient. Under the capitalist system Kalmanofsky might have been an able and even an honest executive.

But the Soviet system drove him to reward his *blatmeisters*, and to sacrifice real efficiency and profit on foreign trade for the sake of making a good showing. He and Manevitch together were so clever at window-dressing that Promexport got a banner as the best export organization, and Kalmanofsky received a decoration and a pri-

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vate motor car. In fact, according to my husband's experiences in other export offices, Promexport was much better run than most Russian enterprises.

Arcadi went back to work at Promexport in 1933, finding his position there as finance manager under Kalmanofsky preferable to the higher rank of vice-chairman of *Lecterserio*. Being a vice-chairman, if you were non-Party, was a rare distinction; but Arcadi found it an impossible assignment. Decisions concerning the work were arrived at in the Communist Party nucleus, which he was not entitled to attend, and yet he was made responsible for the results.

His chief at *Lecterserio*, Comrade Berkinghof, although a friend of ours and a decent chap, was entirely unsuited to his job. He was voluble, excitable, full of vigor and the joy of life, a keen Communist Party member of the sincere kind who had been an excellent officer in the Red Army during the Civil War, but had no administrative ability or business knowledge. Everything was thrown on Arcadi's shoulders, and his being non-Party made him too vulnerable and aroused too much jealousy.

Arcadi was glad to go back to work under Kalmanofsky, who, although not as honest as Berkinghof in either his personal deal-



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ings or the manner in which he ran his enterprise, was much cleverer and cannier and a safer person to work for. Or so it seemed to us at the time. Both of these chiefs of Arcadi's were liquidated later in the great purge—Kalmanofsky only after he had first thrown many of his subordinates to the lions, Berkinghof early in 1936.

The most honest and conscientious specialists usually came off worst. Engineers who could not bear to see beautiful new machinery shattered by reckless speeding up, or rapidly deteriorating through neglect of cleaning and repairs, the carrying out of which would involve a slackening in the mad pace of production; accountants trained in "bourgeois methods" who could not bring themselves to cook accounts in the interest of the director or chairman; heads of export departments who endeavored to get a fair price abroad for goods sold, and accordingly managed to sell smaller quantities at higher prices than those who had overfulfilled the plan by selling far below the world price level—these were the kind of specialists who inevitably, sooner or later, found themselves accused of sabotage, wrecking, and counter-revolution, and disappeared into the concentration camps.

It was the flatterers, the sycophants, the

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men without dignity or pride, who got on well with the Party bosses by constant bootlicking, who secured promotions. The wonder was that so many of the old educated class, the men who had received their training under the Tsarist regime and whose cultural standards were bourgeois, continued to work as well as they were permitted to, without hope of reward and without losing their dignity and integrity.

Of course conditions varied in different enterprises, some Party men being decent, honest, and anxious to do their jobs as well as possible. But such Communists rarely got to the top. The Communist who devoted his main energies to mastering his job, learning from his specialists and from experience, had no time to spend making up to the great, and thus to secure promotion.

An Italian writer described Soviet society as a society based on calumny instead of competition. Calumny was another important method of securing promotion, especially among Party members from 1935 onward in the period of the great purge. If you could discredit, slander, and accuse your superior or your rivals, and get them expelled from the Communist Party or arrested, you might secure a better job.

Often the surest way of protecting your-

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self from an accusation which would ruin your life or cause your death was to get in your accusation first. This applied with particular force to the so-called scientific institutions, like the Communist Academy—later christened the Academy of Sciences—where I worked my last three and a half years in Moscow. Here research work often consisted of a careful perusal of other people's writings to spot their deviations from the Party line and then to denounce them.

My claim to be a textile specialist rested on my book, *Lancashire and the Far East*. I did in fact know a good deal about market demands, prices, and costs of production from the studies I had made in the factories of Lancashire and Japan. I thought that in the job offered me at Promexport I should experience something of the satisfaction my husband found in doing real work instead of talking and writing a lot of foolishness and lies. I was to find myself much mistaken.

Arcadi knew his people, and understood how to get really useful work done in spite of the many obstacles. He had tact and an uncanny understanding of men's minds which enabled him to make his Party boss think he had made a decision himself, when in reality he had adopted one of Arcadi's suggestions.

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Being without vanity or personal ambition, my husband was content if he could get a job well carried out even if he received no personal credit for it.

Arcadi was respected by the better type of Communist Party men, who recognized his ability, his real qualifications and wide knowledge, and his integrity. He also had a dignity and a spirit which made it impossible for anyone to bully him. I think his long residence abroad and his Western manner and behavior over-awed even his Party bosses at times. At any rate, Arcadi survived the purge of the non-Party specialists in 1930-32.

I, however, was treated at Promexport like a valuable ornament. The chairman and vice-chairman liked being able to say that they had a foreign specialist in their enterprise. They were extremely polite and even friendly, occasionally consulted me when they had men from other export organizations or commissariats in the office, took me to dinner with visiting foreign buyers, and for the rest did not care a rap what I did with my time.

My immediate superior, the chief of the textile export department, was the aforementioned *blatmeister* Manevitch. A nice little man who had worked in England for

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some years and knew the language perfectly, he had little time to spare from *blatmeistering* to attend to his own department. The assistant manager was an ignoramus called Bessonoff, who knew nothing and did no work at all as far as I could see. But he had once been Lenin's chauffeur, and this entitled him to a soft job for the rest of his life.

The real responsibility fell on a poor man who had been the manager of a department store in Tsarist times. He was tall and stooped, with a drooping mustache, and prematurely aged. Kind-hearted, extremely courteous to everyone, conscientious and hard-working, he had neither the knowledge nor the capacity to run an export business of these dimensions.

We were exporting cotton goods all over the world: to China, the Dutch East Indies, India, Persia, the Argentine, and some European markets. Persia was our largest market and the traditional outlet for Russian textiles. The Russian industry was adapted to this export trade, which had been carried on in Tsarist times. The taste of the Persians was known and catered to, and in any case the Soviet Union practically had a monopoly there.

But our other export markets were far

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more difficult. Here we succeeded in selling only because we were ready to undercut every other country. My job was supposed to be that of advising what kinds of cotton cloth should be exported to different countries, and at what prices they should be sold.

Obviously the price question should have been the affair of the Russian trading organizations on the spot, but at that date few qualified men were allowed to work abroad. Men like my husband, of long experience in foreign trade and finance, were no longer permitted to leave Russia.

The employees of the Commissariat of Foreign Trade from 1930 on had to be Communist Party members of proletarian origin, or old Bolsheviks without taint of heresy. Men of such qualifications rarely had any others. Nor could they usually speak any foreign language, and they often had not the faintest idea of how to trade.

A Russian-speaking friend of mine at Arcos in London was asked by the Russian in charge of the department where he worked what a bill of exchange was. He found it difficult to get the Russian to understand because he had not the most elementary notion of the functions of a bank. Eventually the foreign staffs, which had

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become so useless, were drastically reduced.

The export organizations, thereafter, had to do most of their trading at long distance from Moscow. Foreign buyers were advised to come to Moscow to make their purchases, and we had fairly frequent visits of big merchant buyers from England and Germany. In consequence of the utter uselessness of our trading representatives abroad, we took to exporting through middlemen.

Our sales to the Argentine were effected through the Manchester firm of Bakerjan, and those to the Dutch East Indies through a large London firm of merchant shippers. Mr. Bakerjan was an amiable Armenian who no doubt made a huge profit on the Soviet exports which he sold in competition with Lancashire goods, but who was very polite about it.

For hours the vice-manager, Mr. Bakerjan and I would sit over the pattern books while he chose his stock. Often, however, what he ordered could not be delivered and we had to pay penalties under our contracts. The real live wire of our department was a young non-Party technician, called Volovitch, who knew the Russian cotton industry from A to Z. He would be able to say from memory not only which factory could pro-

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duce which goods, but also which one was actually likely to be able to produce them under pressure.

When Mr. Bakerjan, or the representative of the English firm which sold our textiles in the Dutch East Indies, pleaded for wider cloth, or bleached goods, our technician went off to visit the factories in Ivanovo Vosnysenk and Tver to try to get them produced. Volovitch not only worked, but continually studied. He had all sorts of ideas for improving production. He made gallant efforts to secure export prices which would give us a little profit, and he never pretended that he had succeeded in exporting the planned quantity of goods when he hadn't.

Of course he ended up in prison. He was non-Party; he was of bourgeois origin, and he was well qualified and keen about his job. Few men of this type survive in the USSR.

It was from him that I learned of the virtual extinction of the vast textile hand-weaving industry which had existed in Russia before the First Five Year Plan. The Soviet Government had liquidated this industry by treating the village and small town weavers as capitalists.

At first I used to spend much of my time making elaborate calculations of the price



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at which our goods could be sold in competition with English and Japanese cloth of the same kind. If the Japanese sold prints of such and such yarn with so many threads per inch at so much, we could, I argued, sell similar cloth by asking a price just a little lower.

Manevitch let me do my petty calculations in peace, but got really irritated if I wanted him to make use of them. What did he, or the chairman, care whether or not we secured a fraction of a penny more a yard on our goods? Neither he, nor Promexport, nor the Commissariat of Foreign Trade would get any credit for that.

All that mattered was to fulfill the Plan, and the Plan demanded the export of so many hundreds of thousands of yards of cloth a month. Price was a secondary question, and if they stopped to bother too much about that they would fail to fulfill the Plan. Moreover, it was easier to secure foreign currency by exporting a large quantity of goods at a very low price than to export a smaller quantity at a higher price.

The ruble having a shifting and largely fictitious value, the factory cost of production and freight charge had little to do with the prices at which Soviet goods were sold abroad. If we obtained 20 or 25 per cent of

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the factory's production cost, we had done brilliantly. It was more usual in the case of textiles to get about 15 per cent of it. This percentage was called the *perecreta*, and, although it varied considerably for different types of goods, it gave some indication of the real value of the ruble.

The *perecreta* was kept secret to avoid foreign accusations of dumping, and in order that gullible Communist tourists might continue to tell the folks at home what high wages the Russian workers were earning. For, of course, the same cloth we sold abroad for a song was also sold in Soviet shops—when available at all for the internal market—at the full cost of production plus a big profit for the Soviet state. The Russian people as consumers subsidized our exports by the high price they paid for textiles.

I started on my work at Promexport full of enthusiasm. With Volovitch's assistance I visited factories in different parts of the country and found out what they were capable of producing. I advised my chiefs of the needs and tastes of foreign markets: widths, designs, quality, and so forth.

I produced long reports concerning the possibilities of manufacturing goods of the required width and quality at our various

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factories, and made careful calculations concerning competitive prices at which Soviet cloth could be sold in different countries.

My reports on my visits to the textile districts were received politely, sometimes even with enthusiasm. I was given a foreign specialist's food card, which was worth literally thousands of rubles.

Although I was treated with honor and ensconced in a soft job, my work was absolutely useless. The Promexport charwoman who received ninety rubles a month, lived with her children in a hallway and existed on black bread, cabbage soup, and an occasional herring, was performing a more useful social function than I was.

No notice was taken of my reports for the simple reason that my suggestions, if acted upon would have made it appear that neither the textile factories nor the exporting organization were fulfilling the Plan. To give a concrete example: the factories working for textile export had in many cases looms wide enough to produce the 27-inch cloth required to make a pair of Chinese trousers, and China was one of our principal markets at that time.

But to have made the required width would have meant producing a lesser num-

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ber of thousands of yards per quarter year, than if they continued to manufacture the traditional Russian width of 24 inches.

To produce a lesser number of yards would have meant nonfulfillment of the Plan; and a lot of people would have been shot or sent to concentration camps. The export organization in its turn would have been able to export only a smaller yardage than before and would also have failed to fulfill its quota. So we continued to sell a narrow cloth at great loss, since naturally the Chinese would buy a cloth too narrow to be convenient only if it were offered at bargain prices.

It was simpler and safer for us to denude the Soviet market of the cloth of which the Russian people were in desperate need than to export a smaller quantity of the right kind of cloth at a higher price.

The textile and other departments of Promexport made so good a showing in those years that Kalmanofsky, as I have already related, was given a decoration and presented with a private automobile. This was done at the cost of stripping the Russian home market of vital necessities, and for a return in foreign currency which was pitifully small in comparison with the sacrifices made by the Russian population.

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The cloth we sold was very defective because the workers were forced to work at top speed on machinery which was often old and almost always neglected as regards cleaning and repairs. They could earn a living only if they paid no attention to quality. They too had their quota to fulfill, or woe betide them. Losing your job is no joke when it also entails losing your ration book, your room, and having your family turned into the street.

At one period the percentage of defective cloth, even in the good factories—which meant those working for export—was as high as 80 per cent of their total production. It all had to be printed, since bleached or dyed cloth showed up the defects too clearly.

The bad quality of Soviet production was largely due, insofar as the textile industry was concerned, to the introduction of what was called the functional system—an imitation of American mass production methods which were entirely unsuited to the old looms and confined space of the Russian factories, and to the lack of skill of the average worker.

When I was assigned to the Commissariat of Light Industry and tried to point out the disastrous results of setting a weaver to perform one function on 20 to 30 looms working

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at top speed, instead of all functions on two looms, as she had been accustomed to do, the Russian specialist who worked beside me told me I had better shut up, since several Russian engineers who had made the same kind of criticism had been arrested for sabotage.

A year or two later the functional system was abolished, and those made to bear the responsibility for its adoption were accused of wrecking. Thus are mistakes rectified in the Soviet Union after they have caused untold loss, and after those who originally pointed out and tried to prevent the mistakes have been liquidated.

I transferred to the newly created Commissariat of Light Industry in the early spring of 1932, hoping that, having failed at Promexport to find work to do which would enable me to earn, as well as to receive, my bread, I might find a useful function to perform if I got closer to the direction of industry itself.

However, my work at the Commissariat proved to be more futile even than at Promexport, where I had at least done the useful job of putting into correct English the letters we sent abroad.

At the Commissariat I did a lot of traveling around, and got an intimate close-up of

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the terrible living and working conditions of the Russian textile workers. I am, of course, not an engineer, and that was the kind of specialized knowledge I now required. But even if I had been so qualified no one would have paid any attention to my recommendations.

After a year's work as a textile specialist I was glad to accept an offer to join the Institute of World Economy and Politics at the Communist Academy, later renamed the Academy of Sciences. Here I could at least cultivate my own garden, study and learn, read and write. After my experience of Soviet industry and trade I relished the peace and quiet.

Petrov's delicious satire, *The Little Golden Calf*, published years ago when a little dangerous thinking was still permitted in the USSR, provided it took a humorous form, gives a picture of how work is done and how life is lived in the Soviet Union, which is a masterpiece of satire.

One chapter tells of an accountant in a Soviet office who, in order to escape one of the periodic "cleansings of the apparatus" and to get a little peace, manages to convince people that he is mad and to get himself sent to a lunatic asylum.

Eventually his deception is discovered,

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and he is sent back to work at his old job. The other clerks and accountants cluster around him to hear of his experiences and he says: "Comrades, it was simply wonderful: of course it was a bedlam there too, but at least in that bedlam they didn't think that they were constructing socialism."

You could not work long at a Soviet institution without realizing that it was all a bedlam. But if you were wise, you did at Rome as the Romans do. You continued to pretend that you were constructing socialism even if you knew very well that you were only helping to create chaos, and playing a part in a gigantic hoax which might have been funny were it not so tragic.

The German specialists were the ones who found it most difficult to adapt themselves to the bedlam. One of the characters in *The Little Golden Calf* is a German specialist brought to the Urals, who waits week after week, and month after month, to start work. The director of the trust who is supposed to give him his orders is never visible.

Either there is a notice on his door saying, "Just gone out for a few minutes" or another notice saying, "Very busy, cannot be disturbed." At all other times he is away traveling on a *Komandirofka*.

The German gets more and more exas-



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perated and angry. The Russians simply can't understand him. "Why," they say, "the man is drawing a huge salary and has nothing to do; why on earth isn't he satisfied?"

Such conditions as those I found in the textile industry were, of course, not peculiar to it. The same causes led to the same results in other industries. Defective workmanship and inefficiency were inevitable, since every man's job, and frequently his life and liberty, depended upon his fulfilling a plan which had been drawn up at the command of dictator Stalin without reference to industrial or human capacity.

Soviet industry and transport, which recovered from the destruction and neglect of the Civil War period have never recovered from the mass arrests and imprisonment of experts in every field in the purge of the early thirties. Most of these experts had worked loyally for the Soviet power since 1920, although not pretending to be Communists.

Stalin's utter stupidity in liquidating or demoralizing qualified personnel has been one of the tragedies of Soviet Russian history. With power stations, blast furnaces, and factories being built by the colossal sacrifices of the Russian people, it was essential to secure the willing and whole-

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hearted collaboration of scientists, engineers and technicians, of statisticians, and of men with administrative experience.

But Stalin has always imagined that compulsion and terror were the best way to secure efficient service. Instead of continuing Lenin's practice of conciliating the specialists and rewarding loyal service, Stalin inaugurated a policy of arresting, shooting, or terrorizing non-Party specialists.

Each year the muddle and waste became worse, and more and more of the honest and well-qualified Russians were liquidated or in fear and despair gave up trying to bring order out of chaos. By the time the Soviet Government started relaxing class distinctions, and modifying the terror against the non-Party specialists, it was too late to undo the damage. In any case there was only a brief respite. Soon bigger and better purges began which swept Communists and non-Party people alike into the concentration camps.

There is a terrible retrogressive force inherent in the use of terror and repression as a means of government. The greater the fear of the government the greater the desire to overthrow it. Terror and compulsion by generating ever greater discontent call forth

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more terror and increasingly drastic punishments.

This negative progression is accelerated in Russia by the government's continual search for scapegoats on whom to lay the blame for the intolerable conditions of life of the people. By indiscriminate arrests of those to whom it ascribes the blame for the ills caused by the system, the Soviet Government intensifies the economic disorder. For inefficiency is the offspring of fear.

The rulers of Soviet Russia are caught in a descending spiral they cannot escape from. The more the people fear them, the greater their own fear of the people. To prevent revolution and keep themselves in power, Stalin and his henchmen must continually exert more pressure to hold the lid down on the seething cauldron of popular hatred of their dictatorship.

Any relaxation of the terror would open the flood gates to revolution.

When an explosion seems imminent Stalin provides a safety valve by diverting popular hatred of the government to individuals. Hence the recurrent search for new and better scapegoats at home and abroad.

During the years I worked as a foreign specialist the scapegoats were found among the qualified non-Party men of bourgeois

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origin, and peasants who clung to private ownership of their farms.

By 1935, however, it was no longer possible to alleviate popular discontent by the sacrifice of a dead or dying class. New victims were required. The Revolution started to devour its progenitors, the original members of the Communist Party.

In the great purge which gathered momentum in 1936 and increased in intensity up to the eve of the world war, Stalin disposed of the Communists who wanted to retreat before the whirlwind of popular hatred and might have deposed him. He not only got rid of his enemies, he also used them as scapegoats.

The ills of Soviet Russia were ascribed to the "Trotskyist-Bucharinist-Fascist Vermin"; Russian agents of the British, French, Nazis and Japanese were alleged to be hiding in every branch of Soviet economy, and to have occupied the highest positions in the government.

The falling of so many heads undoubtedly gave some satisfaction to the workers and peasants who hate the Communist bureaucrats with a bitter hatred. But no amount of blood letting could restore health to the Soviet economy or alleviate the misery of the Russian people.

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It also seemed to me that having created a social system where want, misery, social injustice, and terror reigned supreme, a society which was the very antithesis of the system of plenty and social equality which had been the aim of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917, Stalin set out to destroy all those who still retained any vestiges of the Marxist faith.

The names of the executed and imprisoned which appeared in the press may have meant little to the foreign reader. But to us in Russia they read like a Who's Who of the men and women who had led the Revolution in 1917.

The unjust perished with the just, the corrupt and oppressive officials with the best and most honest, Stalin's oldest friends together with his old enemies who had recanted of their Trotskyist or Bucharinist heresies but had never been forgiven. With the great fell countless minor victims whose names never appeared in the press and who disappeared without trace or trial.

Only when all fear for themselves, their friends, and their families, could Stalin feel safe. According to the Trotskyists Stalin years ago revealed to his closest friends his great sociological and historical discovery: that all regimes in the past fell only because

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of the irresolution and vacillation of the ruling class.

According to this Stalinist doctrine any ruling class if ruthless enough in its struggle against its enemies can cope with all dangers. This theory would explain Stalin's partiality for Hitler in 1939.

Stalin could terrorize men by his utter ruthlessness, he could even force them to do work of a sort without hope of reward beyond a mere subsistence for their families. He could speed up the workers and lay heavy tribute on the peasants. But one thing he could not do: he could not terrorize machines into submission.

Hard-driven and neglected machinery, rails and freight cars worn out by too heavy loads, trucks shaken to bits on bad roads, driven by men whose sole concern was to get through their allotted tasks and save their jobs—all these could not be forced to continue working by threats of starvation or imprisonment. Men might bow down before Stalin, but machinery he could only break.

In every enterprise broken machinery and flagging production could be camouflaged only for a time. In a society where everyone was constrained by fear to cover up deficiencies and mistakes instead of setting them right, pretense, cheating, and camou-

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flage became a fine art, and to lay the blame on someone else became the first lesson of the young Soviet worker.

Everyone conspired to hide the defects in his own work and to denounce others lest he himself be denounced. When total breakdown threatened an enterprise, the NKVD would shoot or imprison a few expiatory victims and the game of camouflage would begin again under new management.

Soviet economy experiences crises far more acute than the cyclic depressions in a capitalist economy. They are temporarily overcome by executions instead of bankruptcies.

Ever since I lived in Russia I have known by the news items from the Soviet Union when a crisis has arisen. For a few weeks the grievances of the workers are aired in the press. The discontent which has reached the boiling point is cooled by the dismissal, shooting or imprisonment of the individuals singled out for blame. Like Moloch the Soviet state periodically demands the sacrifice of innocent human beings.

To maintain themselves in power, however, the rulers of the Soviet Union cannot rely entirely on the terror within their realm. They also frighten their people with an external menace.

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Before and during the Second World War no bogey had to be invented. There was a real threat from Nazi Germany. But before Hitler came to power, as now, Stalin conjured up a vision of capitalist encirclement. Today the exhausted Russian people is warned to bear its trials patiently and support its tyrannical government, lest worse befall them. The "reactionary capitalists" of the United States and England are represented as waiting only for the opportunity to devour them.



## XVIII

### *Arrest*

AT LONG LAST Arcadi and I obtained our own flat, in January 1936. Paid for years before in foreign exchange and in rubles, and long since due to us by the length of our membership in the Cooperative, we had almost given up hope of ever getting it. Now suddenly it was ours. Not without a struggle, not without another bold threat by Arcadi to leave Promexport if the chairman would not help him to secure his rights, but finally ours.

We had to move in the middle of the night because a fight was going on between contenders for our old rooms at *Ordinka*. Both the Commissariat of Foreign Trade and the Commissariat's Cooperative into whose block of flats we were moving, claimed possession. If we didn't let in the people to

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whom the Cooperative had allocated the rooms, they would not give us the key of our new flat.

So we made a lightning move at one o'clock in the morning. We sent Emma on first with my sleeping son in her arms to take possession and sit on the floor with him till we arrived with the furniture after admitting the new occupants to our old rooms.

Our new flat had three rooms, a kitchen, and bathroom, but alas, no bath. After nearly two years with a bath and no hot-water heater we now had a hot-water heater and no bath. Such is life, but we were too happy at getting the flat to complain.

We sold Arcadi's bicycle and typewriter brought originally from Japan, to buy furniture. We reveled in our possession of a flat all our own. No longer had we to share a bath and lavatory, no longer tumble over another family in the kitchen. We ate and slept in a different room. We had real privacy at last.

We should have known that misfortune awaits the fortunate. I remember saying to Arcadi after we moved in that, having at last got a home of our own in Moscow, we should perhaps now soon be leaving Russia. For all my life I had been giving up homes as soon as I was comfortably settled. When

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I was eleven we had left our London home to go abroad on account of my father's tuberculosis. In 1914 the war had deprived us of our Surrey country home. In 1928 I had abandoned the little flat in London where my mother and I had lived since my father died and which I had been able to make comfortable only a short while before leaving England. I had left Japan just after we had started living in a little house where we alone were the tenants. Now, after nearly six years of waiting, we had our own flat in Moscow. It would surely be our fate to move again soon.

For the first time in all those years we could unpack our books and trunks and have ample space for everything. For the first time my son Jon had a large floor space to play in.

I finished *Japan's Feet of Clay* early in March, but it took me three weeks of wangling to secure the paper on which to have it typed. Ordinary Russian paper was gray, soggy stuff, a little like blotting paper. It was admitted that it would be a disgrace to have my manuscript presented to an English publisher on such paper. But I could not secure a supply of better until Varga had himself spoken to a Vice-Commissar at the

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Commissariat of Light Industry. That three weeks' delay prevented my being in England when they arrested Arcadi.

On March 10, 1936 we had a housewarming party to celebrate Jon's second birthday. But without Jane and Michael, parties were rather dull and lifeless. Our old friend from Japanese days, Mentich, was visiting Moscow from the South, where he worked.

To him I opened my heart freely, knowing he was as loyal and devoted a friend as one could possess. A Communist Party member who had fought gallantly in the Civil War, he took no pleasure in the material privileges he received. He longed for the good old days when a revolutionary's life was honest and dangerous, and was trying to get himself sent on an Arctic expedition.

Mentich was a true Russian, huge, blond and blue-eyed, ponderous as a bear and with a laugh which warmed one's spirit. He was arrested a month or so after Arcadi, and I have always hoped that they got sent to the same concentration camp, for on the postcard I received later from Arcadi from Archangel he said he had found an old friend among the prisoners.

On the night of April tenth, Arcadi awakened me saying,

"We have visitors!"

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I sprang out of bed to see a soldier in the hall. Two secret police officers in uniform were in our sitting room, together with the janitor of our block of flats.

The secret police officers warned us we must not speak to each other, and started on a methodical search of the whole flat. We had hundreds of books, and they went through every one of them, shaking out their leaves, scanning the titles.

They went through all my papers as well as Arcadi's, but they couldn't read English, and, strangely enough, they accepted Arcadi's word for the contents of my manuscript and other notes.

We sat silent and tense. The slight up-and-down movement of Arcadi's right foot crossed over his left was all that betrayed his feelings. As the hours passed and the search went on, I said to myself over and over again,

"They will find nothing and then they will go. They will find nothing and then they will go." Thus defensively did I try to keep up my courage, although I knew only too well that the innocent were just as likely to be arrested as the guilty.

When Arcadi's eyes and mine met, we gave each other a smile and a look of confidence and calm. One must keep calm. Is it a

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dream? Has the end come? Is this now happening to us which happened to so many others? Will the nightmare pass, or is this the end of our life and our love?

Slowly the dawn came, but the search went on. The secret police officers were polite, silent, methodical. They selected a few books to take away, including a volume of Marx and one of Keynes.

They took all my letters from Arcadi, preserved through the years. They took my address book. These, some office papers Arcadi had been working on at home, and the books they packed in a bag. At seven o'clock Jon awakened, and we gave him breakfast.

At eight o'clock they told Arcadi they were taking him away to be examined, but the search was not yet completed. I made him coffee. My mind now was filled with only one purpose: to strengthen him for the ordeal before him.

I knew he was innocent, but I also knew of the terrible, long, exhausting examinations to which the secret police subjects its victims. Arcadi had been up all night, and might be confused, too tired to think clearly. By this time they allowed us to talk a little. Jon was around the place, and him they could not silence.

I might have asked Arcadi what I should

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do when he was gone; what I should do if he were imprisoned. But I still hoped he would come home in a few days or a few weeks. I wanted only to give him strength and confidence.

I asked him no questions. I let him rest half-sitting, half-lying on the couch with his head sunk down and his face very pale. I packed a small suitcase with brush and comb, soap, toothbrush, and a change of linen.

At about nine o'clock they took him away. We kissed for the last time. At the door I said, "What can I do? To whom shall I go?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "No one can help," he said.

No words of love passed between us. They were not needed. Reserved to the last and calm to the last, he gave me a gentle smile and was gone.

I never saw him again. He passed out of my life on that lovely April morning, in his English flannel jacket, his black head hatless, a slight figure between the two khaki-clad Soviet secret police officers.

Emma was in tears. I sent her out with Jon. I walked from room to room trying to think what I could do, to whom I could go, where I could discover what Arcadi was accused of. Finally I found myself vomiting.

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Fleetingly I remembered learning in a psychology class that the stomach, not the heart, is the seat of the emotions.

"It must be a mistake," I reasoned to myself. Queer things were going on at Promexport. The manager and assistant manager of a department had been arrested a few days before. That last evening Arcadi had told me about it, but he had not suggested that he himself was in danger.

In order to maintain Promexport's position as the leading export organization, Kalmanofsky, the chairman, had continued to sell certain goods abroad which should, according to a new policy, have been retained for use in Russian industry. This had just been found out by the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection authorities.

Kalmanofsky had placed the blame upon the manager of the department in question, although this man had only carried out Kalmanofsky's orders and, being non-Party, would have lost his job had he refused to do so.

As finance manager of Promexport, Arcadi signed all contracts. Although he was in no way responsible for the kind of goods exported, it would have been a more or less normal procedure to rope him in for examination. This was, I believe, from what I



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learned later, the actual reason for his arrest.

But once you are in the hands of the secret police, they don't let you go easily. If they find nothing against you on one count, they hunt around for some other charge.

The concentration camps are always hungry for more men, always in need of more labor. Almost every citizen has at some time or another said something, or been reported to have said something, critical of the regime, or of the Party line. Or perhaps it can be established that he has been friendly with an accused or condemned person.

That first morning I went to the secret police office in Petrovka, where the officers had told me I could get information as to the reason for Arcadi's arrest. It was the free day and it was closed. Next day I went again and waited in a line-up with others, only to be told that no information could be given me yet. I went each day, and was always given the same answer.

I went to the Commissariat of Foreign Trade. No one could or would help me. But Philip Rabinovitch, always kind, told me not to worry, and said of course Arcadi was innocent and would be home again soon.

Others avoided me. Friends were afraid to speak to me. When someone is arrested

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in the USSR it is as if the plague had struck his family. All are afraid of any contact, afraid to be seen talking to the stricken relations. I was comparatively lucky. Several friends stuck by me.

Mark Kazanin and other friends at the Institute were as friendly as before. Sophie Rabinovitch told me to come to their flat, in the same block as ours, whenever I felt like it. She and Philip had lived for years in the United States and England and had not lost all their decency and courage. Anikeeva, my friend since the distant days we had lived in Tokyo, tried to give me comfort.

At the Institute many shunned me, but I was not dismissed. Varga was kind to me and tried to get information as to why my husband had been arrested.

One man at the Institute whom I had known years before in London attempted to console me by showing me that mine was the lot of all. He said, "I don't suppose there is a family in Moscow which has not lost at least one member in the past years either through arrest or through typhus."

I went to Kalmanofsky, the Chairman of Promexport, in his home. He faced me in a dark room lit by a small lamp on his writing table. He was nervous and ill at ease. His fine Jewish eyes showed panic. I could see

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he was already afraid for himself, and that no help could come from him. Perhaps it was he who had falsely accused Arcadi to save himself.

I went to an ex-OGPU friend. He promised to make inquiries. Two days later he told me I had nothing to fear, Arcadi was being held for questioning in connection with the case of the other Promexport men arrested and, since he could not be held responsible merely because he had signed the fatal contract as finance manager, I had nothing to worry about. I was advised to go to England with my book; and by the time I came back he was sure Arcadi would be free.

I then made my decision. I already had my visa to go to England and return, having applied for it through the Institute before Arcadi's arrest. I had even managed to secure permission to exchange rubles for thirty pounds for my trip to England to see *Japan's Feet of Clay* through the press.

I could take Jon out of the country into safety and return. All through that long week of anxiety, of traipsing from place to place and person to person, I had feared for our son. He was not a British subject because he had been born in Moscow.

I knew how the secret police took hos-

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tages, how they frightened men into false confessions by threatening reprisals on their children. I must get Jon out of the country while I could. Arcadi would want me to save him whatever happened.

So I left Moscow one evening ten days after Arcadi's arrest. Before leaving I handed a letter into the Lubianka prison for him, saying I was going but would return. I shall never know whether or not the secret police let him have it.

After we had crossed the Russian Frontier into Poland, the sick feeling I had had for days began to pass. My heart sang, "Jon is safe; Jon is safe." I could breathe again. Looking after him on the three-day journey without a sleeper took all my energy and thoughts. Jon, now two years old, was excited and restless. In the first days after Arcadi's arrest he had hunted for his father all over the flat in cupboards and even under the beds.

At Berlin, where we waited three hours between trains, we had a bath, and I gave Jon the first banana he had ever tasted. Arrived in London at my mother's flat, I wept for the first time. I think I determined then that somehow or other I would keep Jon in England. He must not grow up in Russia in that terrible atmosphere of cant and lying

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and cruelty and militarism. I must get him safely to England, and he must stay there.

My delay, first in getting typewriter paper and then in waiting after Arcadi's arrest, had made it too late for Faber's to publish my book that season. It would have to wait until September. Their reader, G. F. Hudson, Fellow of All Souls at Oxford, who was unknown to me then but who in future years became one of my best friends, sent in a very favorable report.

Mr. Faber, who had had sufficient confidence in me to contract for the book and pay me an advance on royalties a year before, encouraged me to hope the book would be a success. I began to think that if Arcadi were imprisoned and I could make a reputation in England it might help me to get him out.

Vera telegraphed that they were taking away our flat, and I must come at once. Leaving Jon at a small nursery school in Sussex, for my mother was too old to look after him alone, I hurried back to Moscow.

Emma had saved the flat by barricading herself in it for three days. She had bolted the door and refused to open it. Armed with a letter from Varga, I went to the house management and raised hell. They had intended to put in a friend of the House Committee chairman. Once I showed them that

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I was no cowed wife of a secret police victim, but a foreigner still employed at the Academy of Sciences, they abased themselves in Russian Soviet style with profuse apologies.

The flat was saved for the time being, but the news about Arcadi was very foreboding. His sister, Vera had ascertained that he was now accused of a *political* offense. What offense they would not tell her, but everyone knew that a political charge was far graver than a mere accusation of having done wrong in business.

There began for me the saddest, gloomiest, most trying and anxious period of my life. Day after day I went to the Public Prosecutor's office and stood in line waiting my turn to speak to an official there. According to the Soviet Constitution, the State Prosecutor has "supervision of the exact observance of the laws," and "no one may be subject to arrest except upon the decision of a court or with the sanction of the Prosecutor."

So in theory the Prosecutor is supposed to know why a man or woman is arrested, and one is supposed to be able to obtain information at his office as to the charge. One would imagine that the Prosecutor should

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sign the warrants of arrests executed by the NKVD, as the secret police was now called.

Actually, when Arcadi was arrested, no warrant or any kind of paper was shown to us. Perhaps the Prosecutor does sign a batch of blank slips for the NKVD to fill in, but such a formality, if it does take place, is meaningless.

After, as before, the promulgation of the New Constitution, the power of life and death was left in the hands of the NKVD, which continued to arrest anyone it pleased. The only difference the "inviolability of the person" clause in the Constitution made was that citizens now had to try to ascertain at the Public Prosecutor's office why an arrest had been made, and to send in appeals through him instead of directly to the NKVD.

Each time I finally got to see an official at the Prosecutor's, I was told to come back in four days or in a week's time. When I came back, and had again spent hours standing in line, I was told that the case was now in the hands of another official. When I got to the other official the process was repeated.

After five weeks of this I finally managed, through the help of an influential Party member to get to one of the Assistant Prose-

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cutors, called, as far as I remember, Levine. He spoke German, and our conversation was brief:

*"Ihr Mann hat im Ausland gearbeitet?"*

*"Ja."*

*"In Japan?"*

*"Ja."*

*"Nun, er hat dort was gesagt dass er nicht sagen sollte."*

That was all. Arcadi was in prison because of some remark he had made six or seven years before in Japan.

Perhaps Anikeev was right. Perhaps it was one of his jokes which had been reported and filed away in his dossier, which had got him into trouble.

I started to appeal. I wrote appeals to the Prosecutor, to Yezhov, then Assistant Commissar of the Commissariat of the Interior, (NKVD), and finally to Stalin himself.

I never received even an acknowledgment of any of them.

Meanwhile I was going twice weekly to the NKVD to fill in a form asking to be permitted to visit my husband. Nothing ever came of this either.

Arcadi had been moved in May from Lubianka to the Butirky Prison. This meant either that his examination was completed or that the Lubianka was so full that he had



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been transferred while awaiting further examination.

We could not know which of these alternatives it meant. If he were already condemned we had to go to the prison every three days to see if his name was yet posted on the list of those being sent away to a concentration camp.

The NKVD does not even inform the arrested man's family when he has been condemned and is to be sent away. The family must watch the lists. It might be days or months before the arrested person was removed to a distant prison or concentration camp, and one had no means of knowing whether he or she had already been sentenced or not.

Vera had a friend who knew a woman whose husband was a sort of a trusty among the condemned political prisoners in the Butirky Prison, and who was allowed a visit from his wife once in twelve days. Through this woman we found out that Arcadi was not among those already condemned, so he was evidently still in solitary confinement, or with others still under examination.

No one in the queues at the prison and at the Prosecutor's expected an arrested relative to be given a trial. It was taken for granted that all would be condemned with-

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out trial in secret, or, if a miracle occurred, released similarly without trial.

The articles in the New Constitution guaranteeing trial in open court "with participation of the people's associate judges" (Articles 103 and 111) were a dead letter from the beginning, for they contained a joker: "with the exception of cases specially provided for by law," or "except in special cases."

These articles were only intended to delude gullible foreign "Friends of the Soviet Union," who failed to appreciate the significance of the addition of the words "except in special cases." No citizen of the USSR took the New Constitution for anything more than was intended, a thin façade to cover the naked police regime, a cruel mockery of the millions condemned without trial.

Now that Arcadi had been transferred to Butirky Prison I could deliver food for him every eight days and a change of linen every sixteen days. To do this I went early in the morning with a sack or pillowcase and stood in line after filling in a form stating exactly what was in the sack. If anything forbidden, like cigarettes, was included, everything might be rejected.

The first time I went, a friend of Vera's, an old Social Revolutionary from Siberia,

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went with me to help. For the form had to be carefully filled out, and I might make a mistake over some of the Russian words. Vera's friend was a Socialist of the old school.

For hours that morning she helped poor, illiterate women in the line-up who could not write and feared their pitiful supplies of black bread and onion might be rejected unless they could sign their names on the form.

Many of the women with their breadwinners arrested and children to support were obviously half-starved themselves, but they brought bread for their husbands. The case of most of the people waiting with us was so much more terrible than mine that I began to be almost ashamed of my grief. I had food and Jon had food.

I could support him and, being English, I was not likely to be arrested myself. But these wretched women faced starvation for themselves and their children.

There was no poor relief in Russia. Their neighbors and relatives were too poor to help or were too afraid to help. Even if their children were old enough to leave alone, it was almost impossible for women whose husbands had been arrested to get work.

The proportion of working-class people standing in line seemed to be very high.

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There were different days for different letters of the alphabet. As far as I remember our day included all those whose names began with A, B, C, and D. At this one prison it took hours before my turn came to hand in my sack to the NKVD official. It was therefore obvious to me that the prison was full of "politicals."

Strangely enough, there seemed more good will and friendliness among these people than in other line-ups in Moscow—a comradeship of the damned. They had little left to fear or hope for. The worst had befallen them already.

On May Day, while I was in England and Vera stood in line for me, she heard a man ahead of her say, "Half of the population of Moscow is demonstrating today, while the other half is either in prison or waiting at the prison gates."

The great consolation we got by sending in food at the prison was the proof this afforded that husband or brother, father or wife or son still lived. For in the later afternoon we were given a receipt signed by the prisoner himself, and on the days for handing in clean clothing we received back the soiled linen.

When I got Arcadi's soiled underwear back for the first time after his arrest I

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broke down and cried. It was five weeks since they had taken him away, and this was the first occasion we had had to supply him with a clean shirt, pants, and socks. The stuff we got back was filthy, sweat-stained, black with grime. Somehow this brought home to me more vividly than anything else what he must be suffering.

The prisons were terribly crowded, and I pictured Arcadi in the heat and dirt of a crowded cell. There would certainly be bugs. He would be sleeping on a plank bed, and the room would be airless. Arcadi who was so fastidiously clean had had to wear the same clothing for weeks.

Yet I comforted myself in remembering his philosophic spirit, and his gift for understanding men and never losing his self-control. He would know from the foreign chocolates and soap I had sent him that I had been to England and come back and was still at liberty. That should give him good heart to endure.

He might guess that I had left Jon safely in England. In any case, he knew I could provide for our son, and that I could fight for myself. The NKVD would not be able to force him to a false confession through threats against us.

It was a perfect summer in Moscow. One

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lovely day succeeded another. I would sit on the balcony in the evenings looking down and hoping against hope that Arcadi might come walking along. I imagined the smile and the light or joking words he would surely use when he came home. I shut my mind to the terrible fears which returned with the darkness.

One day in the street I met Berkinghof's wife. He had been taken off the train to prison on his arrival from Mongolia, where he had been the Soviet Trade Representative. She and their young son had been brought to Moscow by the lure of a false telegram purporting to come from him. They had lived well for years, but practically everything they possessed was in Mongolia. Varya was haggard and white, fearing most for the future of their small son, whom they adored. She was trying to get a job, but was refused employment everywhere.

I heard of one arrest after another among our friends and acquaintances. The scythe was sweeping higher. Important people were being taken. Everyone I knew looked afraid. Panic spread. It was clearly hopeless now to try to get anyone to help. All were consumed by fear for themselves.

The radios in the street blared out, "Life is happy! Life is joyous!" Varya and I

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smiled bitterly as we said goodbye in Tverskaya Street.

Vera did all she could about Arcadi, showing the same bold spirit as in her youth. But she was as helpless as I. She bravely assured me that no innocent man would be allowed to suffer. Since Arcadi was of course innocent, he would eventually be released.

Poor Vera was still clinging to her belief in the Communist Party. A year later, in April 1937, she was arrested herself when nearly all who belonged to the proud category of those who had done hard labor as political convicts in Tsarist prisons were purged by Stalin. The revolutionaries of the past were all suspect to the tyrant.

Finally, late in July, I received a cable from my publishers in London that I must come at once to correct final proofs on my book due to go to press. It was impossible to tell how long Arcadi's examination would last. It might be months more or only weeks. I had begun to think that the only way I could help was to go to England and there try to exert pressure on Moscow.

Standing in line at the Public Prosecutor's and sending in appeals was clearly absolutely useless. Moreover, my son had to be provided for in England. I must make some money. I had plenty of rubles, since the thou-

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sands we had received from the sale of the typewriter were only partially expended, but none of this could be exchanged for English currency.

I decided to fly to England and come back after my book was published. This time, however, I could not secure a return visa. The Russians gave me an exit visa, but told me to get my return visa in London because my British passport was about to expire.

This was a valid reason, but I could not be sure that it was the real one. However, I had no choice. I must go to England and could only hope it was true that a visa to return to the Soviet Union would be given me in London.

All this time the treatment I myself had received encouraged the hope that they were not going to imprison Arcadi indefinitely. True that I was English, but other foreigners had been arrested and examined. Surely if they were trying to frame Arcadi they would do something to implicate me as well.

I had the terrible feeling all along that perhaps he was suffering for my sins. I had never *done* anything against the Soviet Government, but I had *thought* a lot against it. I had not always been cautious enough when on trips to England.

Occasionally I had revealed a little of the



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truth on conditions in the USSR to intimate friends. Arcadi, on the other hand, had not only never spoken dangerous thoughts, but had in fact accepted the USSR and had been convinced that no change for the better was possible through a change of government.

He had worked extremely hard, giving all his knowledge, energy, and talents to his job, feeling that this was the only way for conditions to be improved.

Being a Jew and a Russian, he was far more of a fatalist than I, far more resigned and philosophical concerning ills that could not in his view be cured, but could be ameliorated if everyone tried to do his own job as well as possible. Indignation and anger were in his view unnecessary and futile.

I left everything I possessed behind in Moscow: books, clothes, linen, furniture, and of course money. The money I left with Vera, telling her to continue to pay the 200 rubles a month we always allowed to Arcadi's former wife, Anna Abramovna, and Arcadi's son Vitia. Anna Abramovna had had a job for some years past, and Vitia was now in his 'teens.

To keep the flat safe and occupied, I had already installed in it a man and his wife whom I knew to be decent people who would vacate it if and when Arcadi was set free.

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They were glad to take Emma on as their servant. In the second room I placed Vera's son and his wife and child, leaving Emma the smallest room as hers by right, whether employed by the other inmates or not.

The last night I did not go to bed at all. After packing up everything we possessed, I sat down to write a long letter to Arcadi in case he should come home or be sent away before my return—or in case I never got back.

I assured him that whatever happened, even if I did not see him for years, I would continue to love him. Life without him was unbearable and unthinkable and I promised that if he were condemned, I would return and try to be near him, but would leave Jon in England. I left the letter with friends, but Arcadi was never allowed to receive it.

I left Moscow by airplane at four o'clock in the morning. Emma tried to see me off but was not allowed to come to the airport. She wept and clung to me, saying goodbye forever. I assured her I should come back. She was certain that I would not.

Emma was right and I was wrong. I myself feared she might be right as I said goodbye to Moscow, where I had known such joy and such grief.

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Lovely Moscow in the early morning sun with the blue sky over the Kremlin. One of the loveliest cities in the world, and the grave of Communist hopes and of Communist ideals.

Nine years before, almost to a day, I had stood in the Red Square for the first time, my heart full of enthusiasm and faith. Now I was flying away to the west leaving the dearest person in my life inside the prison house which the Soviet Union had become. Tears blinded my eyes as the plane rose into the air.

I never got back to Soviet Russia. For two years I tried again and again in London to get a visa, but each time was put off by my old friend, Ambassador Maisky. He told me to be patient and to wait, until at last I realized that it was hopeless.

Perhaps Maisky feared that I should be arrested too if I went back, and in that event he would have a lot of trouble with the British Foreign Office. Or perhaps he had been forbidden to give me a visa.

Late in August 1936 Arcadi was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Vera telephoned from Moscow to London to tell me. If I had been in Moscow I might have seen him once for a few minutes before he was sent off

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to an Arctic concentration camp. Vera saw him behind bars separating them by several feet.

From Archangel he sent me a postcard assuring me of his love and telling me to be cheerful. Early in 1937 I received a second postcard, this time from Ust Usya in the far north of Siberia, where there was a mining concentration camp. In May 1937 I received a third and last postcard telling me he was well and that he had now been given office work. This implied that previously he had been doing physical labor in the mines.

I have never had another word from him to this day. Perhaps the first year of hard labor had ruined his health, for his heart was already strained and enlarged from overwork when we lived together. Whether Arcadi was shot or whether he died from hardship, ill treatment, cold, or lack of food, I shall never know. It is scarcely possible that he still lives, broken in health, and deprived of all hope of release.

Perhaps of all my many letters and postcards to him not one was ever delivered, and, feeling that I had abandoned him, he ceased to write. This is the bitterest thought of all, but I do not believe he would doubt my love and my loyalty.

His three postcards were full of confidence

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in my affection and in his own. In the last one he had said that one year of our five years' separation had already passed, and he lived for the day when we should be together again.

If by some miracle he is still alive it is impossible that we should ever meet again, since I can never return to the USSR and he can never leave it. But for years I have felt that he is dead.

Emma continued to write to me and to send parcels of food to Arcadi until the late summer of 1937. Then I ceased to hear from her for four months. Finally, in December of 1937, I received a letter from her saying she had been four months in the "Krankenhaus" (obviously meaning prison) and had been very frightened, but that now she was out and had at once sent Arcadi a food parcel. She also sent me a new address for him. After that I never heard from Emma again.

Perhaps she was arrested again. Perhaps her letters were stopped. She had proved the most loyal and fearless of my friends. Only she had dared to go on writing to me after Vera was arrested. She had been my last link, my last source of information about Arcadi.

Our flat had been confiscated, and the friends I had installed there thrown out.

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My money left with Vera had been taken by the secret police. Emma had my clothes and my books. I had told her to try to keep my books safe, but to sell my clothes and linen to buy food for Arcadi. When Emma was silenced, I was as cut off from Arcadi as if he were on another planet.

In the summer of 1938, while I was in China, Ambassador Maxim Litvinov told Lord Chilston, the British Ambassador, that Arcadi Berdichevsky was still alive. But Litvinov offered no proof, and it was obviously to the Soviet Government's advantage to keep my mouth shut by an assurance that my husband was still living. So long as I had hope, I would keep silent and not expose the truth about Russia, which I, having lived there so long as an ordinary Moscow resident know so much better than most foreigners.

I did not ask the help of the British Foreign Office until 1938, because I feared to harm Arcadi by doing so. When I did go to the Foreign Office the official there did all he could to help me. I sent appeals from England to Moscow. One was signed by Professor Harold Laski, Bertrand Russell, Kingsley Martin (Editor of the *New Statesman*), and C. M. Lloyd, with accompanying letters supporting the appeal from George

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Bernard Shaw, and Beatrice and Sidney Webb.

Both George Bernard Shaw and the Webbs had known my father, but it was Bertrand Russell who made them support the appeal. Professor Laski sent off the appeal and he said he sent repeated reminders afterwards. But he never got any acknowledgment.

It would be wearisome to tell of all the appeals and all the people whose aid I enlisted. It was all futile. The Soviet Government, assured of the enthusiastic support of so many liberals, disregarded my case.

Vera had been told by the secret police that Arcadi had been condemned for "having been friendly or acquainted with a Trotskyist." That was all. I gathered from Vera's letter that the "Trotskyist" may have been Berkinghof. Arcadi had worked under him and I had known him for years before in London.

It seems obvious that the whole thing was a frivolous, trumped-up charge made when nothing else could be found against him. Arcadi must have had the strength to resist all their attempts to force him into a false "confession." So he got no trial and disappeared in silence, like so many millions of others.

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It would have dismayed some at least of the friends of the Soviet Union in England and the United States to learn that the Russian Government could be even more cruel than the Nazi Government. For the Nazis did at least allow communication between prisoners and their relatives, and informed the latter when a concentration camp victim died or was shot. Moreover, Arcadi's case constituted clear proof of the fact that in the USSR men are condemned, not only without trial, but without any real charge against them. The Soviet Government, trying to convince the world that it was democratic, might have let my husband go had I at once told my story to the world press.

It took me years to become free again in mind and spirit.

Perhaps my voice could not have affected public opinion any more than those other few voices which of recent years have told the truth about Soviet tyranny. But I wish I had immediately joined the goodly company which tried to save the world from the consequences of a false belief in communism and Russian intentions. That belief played a large part in bringing about the European war, in which millions were killed and mutilated.

Against the tragedy of the Second World



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War, and its aftermath, my own personal tragedy is insignificant. That in itself helped me to make the decision to speak out boldly about Soviet Russia whatever the consequences to Arcadi, if he still lives.







